A Red-Hot Adventure Story **"BRETHREN OF THE BEACH"** by H. D. COUBENS

Thirty-two Additional Pages in this Number

Adventure

JUNE
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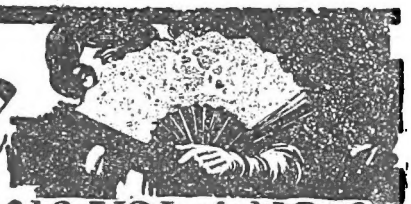

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN-MANAGING EDITOR

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Issued monthly. Yearly subscription, $1.50 in advance. Single copy, fifteen cents

Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Canadian postage, 30 cents.

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Published by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

Erman J. Ridgway, President Ray Brown, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring & Macdougal Streets, New York City

5, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered at the New York Post-Office as Second Class Matter

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SO MANY things have been crowding up for a place on our one little page at the beginning of each number of ADVENTURE that there is nothing for it but to expand that one page into several. The plan of getting our readers acquainted with our adventurer-writers—the real men behind the stories—seems to have struck the right spot. And why not? Real people are always more interesting than mere names, and it's more fun to read a story if you know about the man who wrote it. Especially if he has led a life fully as interesting as the tale itself.

And then there have come in requests and suggestions, many of them excellent, but requiring more than a single page a month to carry them out. So, if you'll turn to the very end of this number you'll find a small new department which is to serve as a chatty and informal meeting-place for readers, writers and editor. Wish it luck, and feel that you have a part in it.

WITH this issue ADVENTURE gives Missouri proof of the steady, healthy growth it has enjoyed since its birth a little over a year and a half ago. As no doubt you have already noticed, you are holding in your hands thirty-two more pages of good reading than you ever held before when you picked up ADVENTURE to forget the dull gray world most of us live in and let your spirit wander out over the Seven Seas and into the far places of the world in response to that restless impulse, that desire for deeds of the hands, which lies hidden away in the breast of each of us.

It's a queer thing, that little flame that never quite dies out. As we come out of childhood the busy, matter-of-fact old world seizes upon us and hisses into our ears, "Here, you've had your time for dreams. Now you're grown up. Get to work or starve to death. Climb up on that stool there, or take hold of this pick and shovel, and stick right at it till they haul you off and bury you. All this fighting-the-Indians business and this stuff about battles and exploring and so on is well enough when there's nothing else to do, but you've got to *work!* Get busy!"

TRUE enough. There aren't any giants in these days, nor dragons and knights-errant. Pirates are awfully scarce and there aren't any undiscovered continents lying around. Even the North Pole has been done, and, by the time you read this, very possibly the South Pole will have been found two or three times, and that's all the Poles there are. People nowadays can't afford to spend much time on that knight-errant and pirate game. This is an age of business and peace-conferences.

But still that little flame never quite dies out in us. Still our pulse runs faster to the tune of daring deeds and strong men in strange places. Our fighting ancestors are still too close to us, and they have left something behind them in our blood.

The Great Peace will some time come. I hope it will. But I think the time will never come when men—or women—will cease to thrill to courage in danger, to adventure and romance. And meanwhile the earth is still full of places where real adventures, and big ones, are happening this very minute.

I STARTED out to talk about ADVENTURE's increase in size and now look at me! But it's such an infernally interesting flame. I haven't really got started. And, anyway, I'm not much good at blowing ADVENTURE's horn. It's different from other magazines, somehow. Seems more like a matter between friends—a chance for everybody concerned to have a good time—one case where the proverbial bars that fence publishers and editors off from the readers have all been let down and everything is comfortable and easy and informal. A case where it seems better merely to let the magazine talk for itself.

So I'll just thank you for your interest and coöperation that have made ADVENTURE prosper enough to return the favor by giving you more for your money's worth when we didn't have to.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN

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Registered in the United States Patent Office

June 1912

Vol. 4 No. 2

KUT-LE OF THE DESERT

by Honoré Willsie

SYNOPSIS: Rhoda Tuttle, an invalid from the East, visiting Mr. and Mrs. Jack Newman on their ranch in New Mexico, has broken her engagement to John De Witt on the grounds of her ill health. Charley Cartwell, or Kut-le, an Indian, but a Yale graduate, and an engineer on the irrigation project, saves Rhoda from a scorpion-bite. He proposes, but is rejected, her liking for him being unequal to her objection to Indian blood. Kut-le therefore adopts Indian measures, and carries her off by force, to win her love and restore her health by shaking her out of partly imaginary invalidism, and shattering some of her artificial ideas by contact with Nature and real life. She is treated with the utmost respect, but forced to stand all the hardships of the hurried flight. She gradually gets over her first horror and hate, but still hopes for rescue and still is hard set against Kut-le. Newman, De Witt and Billy Porter, an old plainsman, are at last sighted in pursuit. They, however, do not see Rhoda and her captor. After several days they come across a Mexican who has seen Kut-le and Rhoda and he joins the party. One morning, as they were breaking camp, they unexpectedly see Rhoda above them on a mesa. Before any one can act, Kut-le snatches Rhoda up on his horse and gallops away. Alchise, one of the Indians, guards the narrow pass. The mad rides and forced marches prove too much for Rhoda. She falls ill with fever and, in the absence of Kut-le, who has gone for water, Alchise takes her to a medicine-man. Kut-le arrives and takes Rhoda to Chira, a Pueblo village, where she recuperates. The pursuing party finally comes to Chira. Kut-le discovers that she has thrown her handkerchief to the street. They set out on the trail once more. While in camp, Rhoda sees De Witt behind a tree and cautions him, but is discovered by Kut-le.

CHAPTER XXVI

"WHATEVER COMES, I SHALL NEVER FORGET THAT!"

FOR many hurrying minutes Rhoda saw only the passing tree branches black against the evening sky as she lay across Kut-le's breast. The pursuers had made no sound nor had Kut-le broken a single twig. The entire incident might have been a pantomime, with every actor tragically intent.

Having long learned the futility of struggling, Rhoda lay quiet enough, her ears keen to catch the sound of pursuit. Kut-le did not remove his hand from her mouth. But as he dropped rapidly and skilfully down the mountain-side he whispered:

"My own ground, you see! It will take them a good while in the dusk to find that back trail. Only a few Indians know it."

But Rhoda's heart was beating high. Let Kut-le boast as he would, she was sure that Jack and John DeWitt were learning to follow the trail. The most vivid picture

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in her mind was of the utter weariness of John's face. In the past weeks Rhoda had learned how fearful had been the hardships that would bring such weariness to a human face. Tears came to her eyes. No one so weak, so useless as herself, she felt, could be worth such travail.

Silently they moved through the dusk. Rhoda knew that the other Indians must be close behind them, yet no sound betrayed their presence. After a half-hour or so she struggled to be set down. But Kut-le only tightened his hold and it was fully two hours later before he set her to her feet.

"Don't move," he said. "We are on a canyon edge."

Rhoda swung her blanket to her shoulders, for the night was stinging sharp. She was not afraid. She had grown so accustomed to the night trail that she now moved unhesitatingly along black rims that had at first paralyzed her with fear.

"Now," said Kut-le, "I'm not going to travel on foot. The only horses within easy distance are some that a bunch of folks have in the canyon below here. So we will go down and get them. We will go together because I can not risk coming back for you. We will have to hike *pronto* after we get 'em. Just remember that you are contaminated by the company you are keeping and that, if you make any noise, the owners of the horses will shoot you up with the rest of us! Keep right behind me."

The little group moved carefully down the canyon trail. In a short time they reached a growth of trees. They stole through these, the only sound Rhoda's panting breaths. Suddenly Kut-le stopped.

"Wait here!" he breathed in Rhoda's ear, and he and Alchise disappeared.

A hand was laid on her arm and Rhoda knew that Molly and Cesca were guarding her. Almost immediately the soft thud of hoofs was upon them. Kut-le seized Rhoda and tossed her to a pony's back.

"It was dead easy!" he whispered. "They were all asleep. I even took a saddle for you. Now hike!"

Rhoda gripped her pony with her knees as the little fellow cantered unerringly through the darkness after Kut-le. She felt a sudden pride and exultation in the security she had developed in the saddle during the travail of her night rides. She knew that no man of her acquaintance could ride a horse as she could now. And with the exultation she was trembling with excitement. She knew that none of them could expect mercy if the owners of the horses discovered their loss in time to take up the chase.

All the eagerness of the gambler who stakes his life on a throw of the dice; all the wild thrill of the chase; all the trembling of the panting woodland things that hunt and are hunted, were Rhoda's as the night wind rushed past her face. The apathy of illness was gone. To-night she was as wild a thing as the night's birds that brushed across their trail on sweeping wing.

WHEN they made camp at dawn Rhoda tumbled into her blanket and was asleep before Alchise finished covering their trail. When she woke she found that they were camped in a strange aerie. They were high up on a mountain on a shelf that gave back into a shallow cave. In front, facing the desert, was a heap of rock that formed a natural rampart. A tiny spring bubbled from the cave floor. Here the little party would seem as secure in their dizzy seclusion as eagles of the Andes.

It was barely noon and the mountain air was sweet and exhilarating. Kut-le sat against the rampart, smoking a cigarette, while Molly and Cesca worked over the fire. Rhoda lunched on the *tortillas* to which Molly had clung through all the vicissitudes of flight.

"Where are the horses?" she asked Kut-le.

"Oh, Alchise took them down to a grazing-place. We must stay here a while till your mob of friends disperses. I couldn't feed the horses up here. They were our own horses, by the way, that I took back from your friends!"

Rhoda gasped, but comment seemed superfluous.

And here on this dizzy brink of the desert Kut-le did pause as if for a long, long holiday. The wisdom of the proceeding did not trouble him at all. The call of the desert was an allurement to which he yielded unresistingly, trusting to elude capture through his skill and unfailing good fortune.

To Rhoda the pause was welcome. She still had faith that the longer they camped in one spot the surer would be the pursuers to stumble upon them. Kut-le began to devote himself entirely to Rhoda's amuse-

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ment. He knew all the plant and animal life of the desert not only as an Indian but as a college man who had loved biology. By degrees Rhoda's good brain began to respond to his vivid interest, and the girl, in her stay on the mountain shelf, learned the desert as has been given to few whites to learn it.

Besides what she learned from the men Rhoda became expert in camp work under Molly's patient teaching. She could kindle the tiny, smokeless fire. She could concoct appetizing messes from the crude food. She could detect good water from bad and could find forage for the horses. The crowning pride of her achievements was in learning to weave the dish basketry.

They had lived in the mountain niche some three weeks when Alchise and Kut-le left the camp one afternoon, Alchise on a turkey hunt, Kut-le on one of his mysterious trips for supplies. Alchise returned at dusk with a beautiful bird which Rhoda and Molly roasted with enthusiasm.

But Kut-le did not appear at supper-time as he had promised. When the meal was almost spoiled from waiting, Rhoda and the Indians ate. As the evening wore on, Alchise grew uneasy, but he dared not disobey Kut-le's orders and leave the camp unguarded at night.

Rhoda speculated, torn between hope and fear. Perhaps the searchers had captured Kut-le at last. Perhaps he had given up hope of winning her love and had gone for good. Perhaps, somewhere or other he was lying badly hurt! The little group sat up much later than usual, Cesca silently smoking her endless cigarettes, Alchise and Molly talking now in Apache, now in English. Rhoda was convinced that they were puzzled and worried.

Even after she had lain down on her blankets Rhoda could not sleep. With Kut-le gone, her sense of the camp's security was gone. She rose finally and sat beside Alchise who, rifle in hand, guarded the ledge. There was no moon, but the stars were very large and near. Rhoda was growing to know the stars. They were remote in the East; in the desert they become a part of one's existence. The sense of stupendous distance was greater at night than in the daytime. The infinite heavens stretching depth beyond depth, the faint, far spaces of the desert, were as if one looked on the Great Mystery itself.

When dawn came, Alchise wakened Cesca, put the rifle into her hands and hurried back up over the mountain. The purple shadows had lightened to gray when Rhoda saw Kut-le staggering up the trail from the desert. Rhoda gave a little cry and ran down to meet him.

"Kut-le! What happened to you? We were so worried!"

There was a bloody rag tied just below the young Indian's knee. He paused, supporting himself against a rock. Across his eyes, drawn and haggard with pain, flashed a look of joy that Rhoda, eying the bandage, did not see.

"I was late starting back," he said briefly. "In the darkness a bit of the trail gave way, dropped me into a canyon and laid my leg open. I was unconscious a long time and lost a lot of blood, so it has taken me the rest of the night to get here. Would you mind getting Alchise to help me up the trail?"

"Alchise has gone to look for you. Lean on me," said Rhoda simply.

Despite his weakness, the dark blood flushed the young man's face, while Rhoda's utter unconsciousness of her changed manner brought a smile to his set lips. Not if the torture of dragging himself up the trail were to be ten times greater would he now have availed himself of help from Alchise.

"If you will let me put my arm across your shoulder we can make it," he said as quietly as though his heart was not leaping.

Rhoda's squaring of her slender shoulders was distractingly boyish. Utterly heedless of the pain which each step cost him, Kut-le made his way slowly to the ledge, ordering back the flustered squaws and leaning on Rhoda only enough to feel the tender girlish shoulders beneath the worn blue blouse.

IN THE camp, Rhoda assumed command, while Kut-le lay on his blanket watching her in silent content. She put one of Alchise's two calico shirts on to boil over the breakfast fire. She washed out the nasty cut and bandaged it with strips from the sterilized shirt. She brought Kut-le's breakfast and her own to his blanket side and coaxed the young man to eat, he assuming great indifference merely for the happiness of being urged.

Rhoda was so energetic and efficient that the sun had not climbed from behind the far peaks when Kut-le finished his bacon

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and coffee. The girl stood looking at him, hands on hips, head on one side, with that look in her eyes of superiority, maternity and complacent tenderness which a woman can assume only when she has ministered to the needs of a helpless masculine thing.

"There!" she said with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Rhoda," said Kut-le, hoping that the heavy thumping of his heart did not shake his whole broad chest, "how long ago was it that you were a helpless, dying little girl without strength to cut up your own food? How long since you have served any one but yourself?"

Rhoda drew a quick breath. She stood staring from the Indian to the desert, to her slender body and back again. She held out her hands and looked at them. They were scratched and brown and did not tremble. Then she looked at the young Indian and he never was to forget the light in her eyes.

"Kut-le!" she cried. "Kut-le! I am well again! I am well again!"

She paced back and forth along the ledge. Through the creamy tan her cheeks flushed richly crimson. Finally she stopped before the Apache.

"You have outraged all my civilized instincts," she said slowly, "yet you have saved my life and given me health. Whatever comes, Kut-le, I never shall forget that!"

"You have changed more than that," said Kut-le quietly. "Where is your old hatred of the desert?"

Rhoda turned to look. At the edge of the distant ranges showed a rim of red. Crimson spokes of fire flashed to the zenith. The sky grew brighter, more translucent, the ranges melted into molten gold. The sun, hot and scarlet, rolled into view. Into Rhoda's heart flooded a sense of infinite splendor, infinite beauty, infinite peace.

"Why!" she gasped to Kut-le, "it is beautiful. It's not terrible. It's unadorned beauty!"

The Indian nodded, but did not speak. Rhoda never was to forget that day. Long years after, she was to catch the afterglow of that day of her rebirth. Suddenly she realized that never could a human have found health in a setting more marvelous. The realization was almost too much. Kut-le, with sympathy for which she was grateful, did not talk to her much. Once, however, as she brought him a drink and mechanically smoothed his blanket, he said softly:

"You who have been served and demanded service all your life, why do you do this?"

Rhoda answered slowly:

"I'm not serving you. I'm trying to pay up some of the debt of my life."

KUT-LE was about in a day or so and by the end of the week he was quite himself. He resumed the daily expeditions with Rhoda and Alchise which provided text for the girl's desert learning. Rhoda's old despondency, her old agony of prayer for immediate rescue had given way to a strange conflict of desires. She was eager for rescue, was conscious of a constant aching desire for her own people, and yet the old sense of outrage, of grief, of hopelessness, was gone.

Of a sudden she found herself pausing, thrusting back the problems that confronted her, while she drank to the full this strange mad joy of life which she felt must leave her when she left the desert. She knew only that the fear of death was gone; that hours of fever and pain were no more; that her mind had found its old poise, but with an utterly new view-point of life. Her blood ran red. Her lungs breathed deep. Her eyes saw distances too big for their conception, beauties so deep that her spirit had to expand to absorb them.

The silent nights of stars, the laborious crests that tossed sudden and unspeakable views before the eyes, the eternal canyons that led beneath ranges of surpassing majesty, roused in her a passion of delight that could find expression only in her growing physical prowess. She lived and ate like a splendid boy. Day after day she scaled the ranges with Kut-le and Alchise, and, tenderly reared creature of an ultra-civilization as she was, she learned the intricate lore of the aborigine, learned what students of the dying people would give their hearts to know!

KUT-LE wakened Rhoda at dawn one day. She prepared the breakfast of coffee, bacon and *tortilla*. Alchise shared this eagerly with Rhoda and Kut-le, though already he had eaten with the squaws. The day was still gray when the three set out on a long day's trip in search of game. The way this morning led up a canyon deep and quiet, with the night

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shadows still dark and cool within it. The air was that of a Northern day of June.

Rhoda tramped bravely, up and up, from cactus to bear-grass, from bear-grass to stunted cedar, from cedar to pines that at last rose triumphant at the crest of a great ridge. Here Rhoda and Kut-le flung themselves to the ground to rest, while Alchise prowled about restlessly. Across a hundred miles of desert rose faint snow-capped peaks.

Kut-le watched Rhoda's rapt face for a time. Then, as if unable to keep back the words, he said softly:

"Rhoda! Stay here always! Marry me and stay here always!"

Rhoda looked at the beautiful pleading eyes. She stirred restlessly, but before she could frame an answer Alchise appeared, followed by a lean old Indian all but toothless, who wore a pair of tattered overalls and a gauze shirt. The two Indians stopped before Kut-le, and Alchise jerked a thumb at the stranger.

"*Sabe* no white talk," he said.

Kut-le passed the stranger a cigarette, which he accepted without comment. A rapid conversation followed among the three Indians.

"He is an Apache," explained Kut-le, finally, to Rhoda. "His name is Injun Tom. He says that Newman and Porter hired him to trail us, but he is tired of the job. They foolishly advanced him five dollars. He says they are camping in the valley right below here."

Rhoda sprang to her feet.

"Where are you going?" smiled Kut-le. "He says they are going to shoot me on sight."

Under her tan, Rhoda's face whitened.

"Would they shoot you, Kut-le, even if I told them not to?"

At the sight of the paling face the young man murmured, "You dear!" under his breath. Then aloud, "Not if I were your husband."

"How can I marry a savage?" cried Rhoda.

Kut-le put his hand under the cleft chin and lifted the sweet face till it looked directly into his. His gaze was very deep and clear.

"Am I nothing but a naked savage, Rhoda?" he said. "Am I?"

Rhoda's eyes did not leave his. "No!" she said softly, under her breath.

Kut-le's eyes deepened. He turned and picked up his rifle.

"Bring your friend back to dinner, Alchise," he said. "Our little holiday must end right here."

They reached the camp at noon, and while the squaws made ready for breaking camp, Rhoda sat deep in thought. Before her, the burning sky, and desert hawk and buzzard circling in the clear blue. Where had the old hatred of Kut-le gone? Whence came this new trust and understanding, this thrill at his touch? Kut-le, who had been watching her adoringly, rose and came to her side.

The rampart hid the two from the others. Kut-le took one of Rhoda's hands in his firm fingers and laid his lips against her palm. Rhoda flushed and drew her hand away. But Kut-le again put his hand beneath her cleft chin and lifted her face to his.

Just as the brown face all but touched hers a voice sounded from behind the rampart:

"Hello, you! Where's Kut-le?"

CHAPTER XXVII

THE ESCAPE

RHODA sprang away from Kut-le and they both ran to the other side of the rampart. Billy Porter, worn and tattered, but still looking very well able to hold his own, stood staring into the cave where the squaws eyed him open-mouthed, and Alchise, his hand on his rifle, scowled at him aggressively. Porter's eye fell on Injun Tom.

"U-huh! You pison Piute, you! I just nacherally snagged your little game, didn't I?"

"Billy!" cried Rhoda. "Oh, Billy Porter!"

Porter jumped as if at a blow. Rhoda stood against the rock in her boyish clothes, her beautiful braid sweeping her shoulder, her face vivid.

"My God, Miss Rhoda!" cried Billy, hoarsely, as he ran toward her with outstretched hands. "Why, you are well! What happened to you?"

Here Kut-le stepped between the two.

"Hello, Mr. Porter," he said.

Billy stepped back and a look of loathing and anger took the place of the joy that had been in his eyes before.

"You Apache devil!" he growled. "You

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ain't as smart as you thought you were!"

Rhoda ran forward and would have taken Porter's hand, but Kut-le restrained her with his hand on her shoulder.

"Where did you come from, Billy?" cried Rhoda. "Where are the others?"

Billy's face cleared a little at the sound of the girl's voice.

"They are right handy, Miss Rhoda."

"I'll give you a few details, Rhoda," said Kut-le coolly. "You see he is without water and his mouth is black with thirst. He started to trail Injun Tom, but got lost and stumbled on us."

Rhoda gave a little cry of pity and, running into the cave, she brought Billy a brimming cup of water.

"Is that true, Billy?" she asked. "Are the others near here?"

Billy nodded, then drained the cup and held it out for more.

"They are just around the corner!" with a glance at Kut-le, who smiled skeptically.

"Oh!" exclaimed Rhoda. "What terrible trouble I have made you all!"

"*You* made!" said Porter. "Well, that's good! Still, that Apache devil doesn't seem to have harmed you. Just the same, he'll get his! If I shot him now, the other Injuns would get me, and God knows what would happen to you!"

"Whom do you call an Apache devil?" asked Kut-le.

Rhoda never had seen him show such evident anger.

"You, by Judas!" replied Porter, looking into the young Indian's face.

For a strained moment the two eyed each other, hatred glaring at hatred, until Rhoda put a hand on Kut-le's arm. His face cleared at once.

"So that's my reputation now, is it?" he said lightly.

"*That* your reputation!" sneered Billy. "Do you think that's all? Why, don't you realize that you can't live in your own country again? Don't you know that the whites will hunt you out like you was a rat? Do you realize that the folks that believed in you and was fond of you has had to give up their faith in you? Don't you understand that you've lost all your white friends? But I suppose that don't mean anything to an Injun!"

A look of sadness passed over Kut-le's face.

"Porter," he said very gently, "I counted on all of that before I did this thing. I thought that the sacrifice was worth while, and I still think so. I'm sorry for your sake that you stumbled on us here. We are going to start on the trail shortly and I must send you out to be lost again. I'll let Alchise help you in the job. As you say, I have sacrificed everything else in life; I can't afford to let anything spoil this now. You can rest for an hour. Eat and drink and fill your canteen. Take a good pack of meat and *tortillas*. You are welcome to it all."

The Indian spoke with such dignity, with such tragic sincerity, that Porter gave him a look of surprise, and Rhoda felt hot tears in her eyes. Kut-le turned to the girl.

"You can see that I can't let you talk alone with Porter, but go ahead and say anything you want to in my hearing. Molly, you bring the white man some dinner and fix him some trail grub. Hurry up, now!"

HE SEATED himself on the rampart and lighted a cigarette. Porter sat down meditatively, with his back against the mountain wall. He was discomfited. Kut-le had guessed correctly as to the circumstances of his finding the camp. He had no idea where his friends might have gone in the twenty-four hours since he had left them. When he stumbled on to Kut-le he had had a sudden hope that the Indian might take him captive. The Indian's quiet reception of him nonplused him and roused his unwilling admiration.

Rhoda sat down beside Porter.

"How is John?" she asked.

"He is pretty good. He has lasted better than I thought he would."

"And Katherine and Jack?"

Rhoda's voice trembled as she uttered the names. It was only with the utmost difficulty that she spoke coherently. All her nerves were on the alert for some unexpected action on the part either of Billy or the Indians.

"Jack's all right," said Billy. "We ain't seen Mrs. Jack since the day after you was took, but she's all to the good, of course, except she's been about crazy about you, like the rest of us."

"Oh, you poor, poor people!" moaned Rhoda.

Porter essayed a smile with his cracked lips.

"But say, you do look elegant, Miss Rhoda! You ain't the same girl!"

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Rhoda blushed through her tan.

"I forgot these," she said, "I've worn them so long."

"It ain't the clothes," said Billy, "and it ain't altogether your fine health. It's more —I don't know what it is! It's like the desert!"

"That's what I tell her," said Kut-le.

"Say," said Billy, scowling, "you've got a nerve, cutting in as if this was a parlor conversation you had cut in on casual. Just keep out of this, will you!"

Rhoda flushed.

"Well, as long as he can hear everything, it's a good deal of a farce not to let him talk," she said.

"Farce!" exclaimed Billy. "Say, Miss Rhoda, you ain't sticking up for this ornery Piute, are you?"

Rhoda looked at the calm eyes of the Indian, at the clean-cut intelligence of his face, and she resented Porter's words. She answered him softly but clearly:

"Kut-le did an awful and unforgivable thing in stealing me. No one knows that better than I do. But he has treated me with respect and he has given me back my health. I thank him for that and—and I do respect him!"

Kut-le's eyes flashed with a deep light, but he said nothing. Porter stared at the girl with jaw dropped.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "Respect him! Wouldn't that come and get you! Do you mean that you want to stay with that Injun?"

A slow flush covered Rhoda's tanned cheeks. Her cleft chin lifted a little.

"At the very first chance," she replied, "I shall escape."

Porter sighed in great relief.

"That's all right, Miss Rhoda," he said leniently. "Respect him all you want to. I don't see how you can, but women is queer, if you don't mind my saying so. I don't blame you for feeling thankful about your health. You've stood this business better than any of us. Say, that squaw seems to be putting all her time on making up my pack. Can't I negotiate for something to eat right now? Tell her not to put pison into it."

Kut-le grinned.

"Maybe Miss Tuttle will fix up something for you so you can eat without worrying."

"Well, she won't, you know!" growled Porter. "*Her* wait on me! She ain't no squaw!"

"Oh, but," cried Rhoda, "you don't know how proud I am of my skill! I can run the camp just as well as the squaws." Then, as Porter scowled at Kut-le, "He didn't make me! I wanted to so as to be able to take care of myself when I escaped. When you and I get away from him," she looked at the silent Indian with an expression of daring that brought a glint of amusement to his eyes, "I'll be able to live off the trail better than you!"

"Gee!" exclaimed Porter admiringly.

"Of course, in one way it's no credit to me at all," Rhoda went on, stirring the rabbit stew she was warming up. "Kut-le——"

She paused. Of what use was it to try to explain what Kut-le had done for her?

She toasted fresh *tortillas* and poured the stew over them and brought the steaming dish to Porter. He tasted of the mess tentatively.

"By hen!" he exclaimed, and he set upon the stew as if half starved, while Rhoda watched him complacently.

SEEING him apparently thus engrossed, Kut-le turned to speak to Alchise. Instantly Porter dropped the stew, drew a revolver and fired two rapid shots, one catching Alchise in the leg, the other Injun Tom. Before he could get Kut-le the young Indian was upon him.

"Run, Rhoda, run!" yelled Porter, as he went down, under Kut-le.

Rhoda gave one glance at Injun Tom and Alchise writhing with their wounds, at Porter's fingers tightening at Kut-le's throat; then she seized the canteen she had filled for Porter and started madly down the trail. The screaming squaws gave no heed to her.

She ran swiftly, surely, down the rocky way, watching the trail with secondary sense, for every other was strained to catch the sounds from above. But she heard nothing except the screams of the squaws. The trail twisted violently near the desert floor. She sped about one last jutting buttress, then stopped abruptly, one hand on her heaving breast.

A man was running toward the foot of the trail. He, too, stopped abruptly. The girl seemed a marvel of beauty to him. With the curly hair beneath the drooping sombrero, the tanned, flushed face, the

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parted scarlet lips, the throat and tiny triangle of chest disclosed by the rough blue shirt with one button missing from the top, and the beautiful lithe legs in the clinging buckskins, Rhoda was a wonderful thing to come upon unexpectedly. As John DeWitt took off his hat, his haggard face went white, his stalwart shoulders heaved.

"Oh, John! Dear John DeWitt!" cried Rhoda. "Turn back with me quick! I am running away while Mr. Porter holds Kut-le!"

DeWitt held out his shaking hands to her, unbelieving rapture growing in his eyes.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ADRIFT IN THE DESERT

RHODA put her hands into the outstretched, shaking palms.

"Rhoda! Sweetheart! Sweetheart!" DeWitt gasped. Then his voice failed him.

For an instant Rhoda leaned against his heaving chest. She felt as if after long wandering in a dream she suddenly had stepped back into life. But it was only for the instant that she paused. Her face was blazing with excitement.

"Come!" she cried. "Come!"

"Take my arm! Or had I better carry you?" exclaimed DeWitt.

"Huh!" sniffed Rhoda. "Just try to keep up with me, that's all!"

DeWitt, despite the need for haste, stopped and stared at the girl, open-mouthed. Then as he realized what superb health she showed in every line of face and body, he cried:

"You are well! You are well! Oh, Rhoda, I never thought to see you this way!"

Rhoda squeezed his fingers joyfully.

"I am so strong! Hurry, John! Hurry!"

"Where are the Indians?" panted DeWitt, running along beside her. "What were those shots?"

"Billy Porter found our camp. He shot Alchise and Injun Tom, and he and Kut-le were wrestling as I ran." Then Rhoda hesitated. "Perhaps you ought to go back and help Billy!"

But John pulled her ahead. "Leave you until I get you to safety? Why, Billy himself would half murder me if I thought of it! Our camp is over there, a three hours' trip." DeWitt pointed to a distant peak. "If we swing around to the left, the Indians won't see us!"

Hand in hand the two settled to a swinging trot. The dreadful fear of pursuit was on them both. It submerged their first joy of meeting and left them panic-stricken. For many minutes they ran without speaking. At last, when well out into the burning heat of the desert, they could keep up the pace no longer and dropped to a rapid walk. Still there came no sound of pursuit.

"Was Porter hurt?" panted John.

"Not when I left," answered Rhoda.

"I wonder what his plan is," said John. "He left the camp yesterday to trail Injun Tom. We'll go back for him as quick as I can get you to camp."

Rhoda looked up at DeWitt anxiously.

"You are very tired and worn, John," she said.

"And you!" cried the man, looking down at the girl, with her swinging, tireless stride. "What miracle has come to you?"

"I never dreamed that there could be health like this! I—" She stopped, with head to one side. "Do you hear anything? What do you suppose they are doing to each other? Oh, I hope neither of them will get killed!"

"I hope— They have all promised to let me deal with Kut-le!" said DeWitt grimly, pausing to listen intently. But no sound came across the burning sands.

Rhoda started at DeWitt's words. Suddenly her early sense of the appalling nature of her experience returned to her. She looked with new eyes at DeWitt's face. It was not the same face that she had last seen at the Newmans' ranch. John had the look of a man who has passed through the fire of tragedy. She gripped his burned fingers with both her slender hands.

"Oh, John!" she cried, "I wasn't worth it! I wasn't worth it. Let's get to the camp quickly so that you can rest! It would take a lifetime of devotion to make up for that look in your face!"

John's quiet manner left him. "It was a devilish thing for him to do!" he said fiercely. "Heaven help him when I get him!" Then, before Rhoda could speak, he smiled grimly. "This pace is fearful. If you keep it up you will have sunstroke, Rhoda; and at that you're standing it better than I!"

They slowed their pace. DeWitt was breathing hard as the burning lava-dust bit into his throat.

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"I haven't minded the physical discomfort," he went on; "it's the mental torture that's been killing me. We've pushed hot on your trail hour after hour, day in and day out. When they made me rest I could only lie and listen to you sob for help until —Oh, my love! My love——"

His voice broke and Rhoda laid her cheek against his arm for a moment.

"I know! Oh, John dear, I know!" she whispered.

They trudged on in silence for a time, both listening for the sound of pursuit. Then DeWitt spoke as if he forced himself to ask for an answer that he dreaded:

"Rhoda, did they torture you much?"

"No! There was no torture except that of fearful hardships. At first—you know how weak and sick I was, John—at first I just lived in an agony of fear and anger; a sort of nightmare of exhaustion and frenzy. Then at Chira I began to get strong, and as my health came, the wonder of it, the—Oh, I can't put it into words! Kut-le was—" Rhoda paused, wondering at the reluctance with which she spoke the young Indian's name. "You missed us so narrowly so many times!"

"The Indian had the devil's own luck and we always blundered," said DeWitt. "I have had the feeling lately that my bones would be bleaching on this stretch of Hades before you ever were heard of. Rhoda, if I can get you safely to New York again I'll shoot the first man who says desert to me!"

RHODA became strangely silent, though she clung to John's hand and now and again lifted it against her cheek. The yellow of the desert reeled in heat-waves about them. The deep, intensely deep, blue of the sky glowed silently down on them. Never to see them again! Never to waken with the desert stars above her face or to make camp with the crimson dawn blinding her vision! Never to know again the wild thrill of the chase! Finally Rhoda gave herself a mental shake and looked up into John's tired face.

"How did you come to leave the camp, John?" she asked gently.

"It's all been luck," said John. "With the exception of a little trail wisdom that Billy or Carlos raked up once in a while, it's just been hit-or-miss luck with us. We suspected that Billy had gone on Injun Tom's trail, so we made camp on the spot so he wouldn't lose us. I stood guard this morning while Jack and Carlos slept and then I thought that that was fool nonsense, as Kut-le never traveled by day. So I started on a hunt along Billy's trail, and here we are!"

"Are there any other people hunting for me?"

"Lord, yes! At first they were fairly walking over each other. But the ranchers had to go back to their work and the curious got tired. Most of those that are left are down along the Mexican border. They thought, of course, that Kut-le would get off American territory as soon as he could. Must we keep such a pace, Rhoda, girl? You will be half dead before we can reach the camp!"

Rhoda smiled.

"I've followed Kut-le's tremendous pace so many miles that I doubt if I shall ever walk like a perfect lady again!"

"I thought that I would go off my head," DeWitt went on, dropping into a walk, "when I saw you there at Dead Man's Mesa and you escaped into that infernal crevice! Gee, Rhoda, I can't believe that this really is you!"

CHAPTER XXIX

WHILE THE WHITE MAN SLEEPS

THE sun was setting as they climbed through a wide stretch of greasewood to the first rough rock heaps of the mountains. Then DeWitt paused uncertainly.

"Why, this isn't right. I never was here before!"

Rhoda spoke cheerfully. "Perhaps you have the right mountain but the wrong trail."

"No! This is altogether wrong. I remember this peak now with a sort of saw edge to the top. What a chump I am! I distinctly remember seeing this mountain from the trail this morning."

"How did it lie?" asked Rhoda, sitting down on a convenient stone.

"Gee, I can't remember whether to the right or left!"

Rhoda clasped and unclasped her hands nervously:

"I hate to stop. One can't tell what Kut-le is up to!"

DeWitt squared his broad shoulders.

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"Don't you worry, little girl. If he does find us he'll have to take us both! We'll just have to rest here for a moment. There's no use starting till we have our sense of direction again."

Rhoda smiled. After all the fearful lessons, DeWitt had not yet come to a full realization of the skill and resourcefulness of Kut-le. The girl said nothing, however, but left the leadership to DeWitt. The sun was setting, turning to clear red and pale lavender a distant peak that then merged with the dusk, one could not tell when nor how.

Rhoda and DeWitt sat at the foot of an inhospitable crag whose distant top baring itself to the heavens was a fearful climb above them. Rhoda watched the sunset a little wistfully. She must impress on her memory every one that she saw now. She felt that her days in the desert were numbered.

DeWitt shook his empty canteen.

"It was mighty clever of you to bring a canteen. We've got to be careful of the water question. Of course I'm confident we will reach camp this evening, but you can't be too careful of water anyhow. Heavens! Think of Jack Newman's face when we come strolling in! We ought to be back in the ranch in five days."

"Do you know, it's going to be strange to talk with Katherine!" exclaimed Rhoda. "She's a white woman, you know!"

DeWitt took both of Rhoda's brown little hands in his.

"I'm not appearing very sympathetic, sweetheart," he said, "but I'm so crazy with joy at having you again and at finding you so well, that I don't know what I'm saying."

"John," said Rhoda slowly, "I don't need any sympathy! I tell you that this has been the most wonderful experience that ever came into my life. I have suffered—" her voice trembled and John's hold on her hands tightened—"God only knows how I have suffered, but I have learned things that were worth the misery!"

DeWitt looked at her wide-eyed.

"You're a wonder!" he exclaimed.

Rhoda laughed softly.

"You ought to hear the Indians' opinion of me! Do you know what I've thought of lots of times lately? You know that place on the Hudson where men go when they are nervous wrecks and the doctor cures them by grilling them mentally and physically clear beyond endurance? Well, that's the sort of a cure I've had, except that I've had two doctors, the Indian and the desert!"

DeWitt answered slowly:

"I don't quite see it! But I know one thing. You are about the gamest little thoroughbred I ever heard of!"

The moon was rising and DeWitt watched Rhoda as she sat with her hands clasping her knee in the boyish attitude that had become a habit.

"You are simply fascinating in those clothes, Rhoda. You are like a beautiful slender boy in them."

"They are very comfortable," said Rhoda, in such a sedate, matter-of-fact tone, despite her blush, that DeWitt chuckled. He threw his arm across her shoulder and hugged her to him ecstatically.

"Rhoda! Rhoda! You are the finest ever! I can't believe that this terrible nightmare is over! And to think that instead of finding you all but dead, you are a thousand times more fit than I am myself! Rhoda, just think! You are going to live! To live! You will not be my wife just for a few months, as we thought, but for years and years!"

They stood in silence for a time, each one busy with the picture DeWitt's words had conjured. Then DeWitt emptied the pipe he had been smoking.

"Yonder is our peak, by Jove! It looked just so in the moonlight last night. I didn't recognize it by daylight. If you're rested, we'll start now. You must be dead hungry! I know I am!"

Refreshed and hopeful, they swung out into the wonder of the moonlit desert. They soon settled to each other's pace, and with the full moon glowing in their faces they made for the distant peak.

"Now," said John, "tell me the whole story!"

SO RHODA, beginning with the moment of her abduction, told the story of her wanderings, told it simply, though omitting no detail. Nothing could have been more dramatic than the quiet voice that now rose, now fell with intensity of feeling. DeWitt did not interrupt her, except with a muttered exclamation now and again.

"And the actual sickness was not the worst," Rhoda continued, after describing her experiences up to her sickness at Chira,

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"it was the delirium of fear and anger. Kut-le forced me beyond the limit of my strength. Night after night I was tied to the saddle and kept there till I fainted. Then I was rested only enough to start again. And it angered and frightened me so! I was so sick! I loathed them all so, except Molly. But after Chira a change came. I got stronger than I ever dreamed of being. And I began to understand Kut-le's methods. He had realized that physically and mentally I was at the lowest ebb and that only heroic measures could save me. He had the courage to apply the measures."

"God!" muttered John.

Rhoda scarcely heeded him.

"It was then that I began to see things that I could not see before and to think thoughts that I could not have thought before. It was as if I had climbed a mental peak that made my old highest ideals seem like mere foothills!"

The quiet voice led on and on, stopping at last with Porter's advent that afternoon. Then Rhoda looked up into DeWitt's face. It was drawn and tense. His eyes were black with feeling and his close-pressed lips twitched.

"Rhoda," he said at last, "I thought most of the savage had been civilized out of me. But I tell you now that if ever I get a chance I shall kill that Apache with my bare hands!"

Rhoda laid her hand on DeWitt's arm.

"Kut-le, after all, has done me only a great good, John!"

"But think how he did it! The devil risked killing you! Think what you and we all have suffered! God, Rhoda, think!" And DeWitt threw his arm across his face with a sob that wrenched his shoulders.

Inexpressibly touched, Rhoda stopped and drew John's face down to hers, rubbing it softly with her velvet cheek.

"There, dear, there! I can't bear to see you so! My poor tired boy! You have all but killed yourself for me!"

DeWitt lifted the slender little figure and held it tensely in his arms a moment then set her gently down.

"A woman's magnanimity is a strange thing," he said.

"Kut-le will suffer," said Rhoda. "He risked everything and has lost. He has neither friends nor country now."

"Much he cares," said DeWitt, "except for losing you!"

Rhoda made no answer. She realized that it would take careful pleading on her part to win freedom for Kut-le if ever he were caught. She changed the subject.

"Have you found living off the desert hard? I mean as far as food was concerned?"

"Food hasn't bothered us," answered John. "We've kept well supplied."

Rhoda chuckled. "Then I can't tempt you to stop and have some roast mice with me?"

"Thank you," answered DeWitt. "Try and control your yearning for them, honey girl. We shall be at camp shortly and have some white man's grub."

"How long since you have eaten, John?" asked Rhoda, who had been watching the tall fellow's difficult and slacking steps for some time.

"Well, not since last night, to tell the truth. You see I was so excited when I struck Porter's trail that I didn't go back to the camp. I just hiked."

"So you are faint with hunger," said Rhoda, "and your feet are blistered, for you have done little tramping in the hot sand before this. John, look at that peak! Are you sure it is the right one?"

DeWitt stared long and perplexedly.

"Rhoda, girl," he said, "I don't believe it is, after all. I am the blamedest tenderfoot! But don't you worry. We will find the camp. It's right in this neighborhood."

"I'm not worrying," answered Rhoda, stoutly, "except about you. You are shaking with exhaustion, while I am as fit as can be."

"Oh, don't bother about me!" exclaimed John. "I'm just a little tired."

But Rhoda was not to be put off.

"How much did you sleep last night?"

"Not much," admitted DeWitt. "I haven't been a heavy sleeper at times ever since you disappeared, strange as that may seem!" Then he grinned. It was pleasant to have Rhoda bully him.

Yet the big fellow actually was sinking with weariness. The fearful hardships that he had undergone had worked havoc with him. Now that the agonizing nerve-strain was lifted he was going to pieces. He stood wavering for a minute, then he slowly sat down in the sand.

Rhoda stood beside him uncertainly, and looked from the man to the immovably distant mountain peak. She realized that the

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risk of recapture by stopping was great, yet her desert experiences told her that John must regain some of his strength before the sun caught them. She had little faith that they would tumble upon the camp as easily as John thought, and she wanted to prepare for a day of desert heat.

"If we were sure just where the camp lay," she said, "I would go on for help. But as we aren't certain, I'm afraid to be separated from you, John."

John looked up fiercely with his haggard eyes.

"Don't you dare to move six inches from me, Rhoda. It will kill me to lose you now."

"Of course I won't," said Rhoda. "I've had my lesson about losing myself in the desert. But you must have some sleep before we go any farther."

Rhoda spoke with a cheerfulness she did not feel. She looked about for a comfortable resting-place, but the desert was barren.

"There's no use trying to find a comfortable bed," she said. "You had better lie down right where you are."

"Honey," said John, "I've no idea of sleeping. It will be time enough for that when we reach camp. But if you think you could stand guard for just ten minutes, I will lie flat in the sand and rest. You take my watch and time me."

"That's splendid," said Rhoda, helping him to clear rocks and cactus from a space long enough to lie in.

"Just ten minutes," said DeWitt, and as he spoke he sank to sleep.

RHODA stood in the moonlight looking into the man's unconscious face. His new-grown beard gave him a haggard look that was enhanced by the dark circles under his eyes. That wan face touched Rhoda much more than the healthy face of former days. The lines of weariness and pain that never could be fully erased were all for her, she thought, with a little catch of her breath. Then with a pitying, affectionate look at the sleeping man came a whimsical smile. Once she had thought no one could equal John in physical vigor. Now she pictured Kut-le's panther strength and endurance, and smiled.

She looked at the watch. Five hours to dawn. She would let John have the whole of that time in which to sleep. His ten minutes would be worse than useless, while to find the camp after the moon had set would be quite out of the question. Her own eyes were wide and sleepless. She sat in the sand beside DeWitt until driven by the cold to pace back and forth.

John slept without stirring; the sleep of complete exhaustion. Rhoda was not afraid nor did she feel lonely. The desert was hers now. There was no wind, but now and again the cactus rustled as if unseen wings had brushed it. The dried heaps of cholla stirred as if unseen paws had pressed them. From afar came the demoniacal laughter of coyotes on their night hunts. But still Rhoda was not afraid.

At first, in the confusion of thoughts that the day's events had crowded on her, her clearest sense was of thankfulness. Then she fell to wondering what had happened to Porter and Kut-le. Suddenly she caught her breath with a shiver. If Porter won, there could be but one answer as to Kut-le's fate. John's attitude of mind told that. Rhoda twisted her hands together.

"I will not have him killed!" she whispered. "No! No! I will not have him killed!"

For many minutes she paced back and forth, battling with her fears. Then she suddenly recalled the fact that vengeance was to be saved for DeWitt. This uncanny thought comforted her. She had little fear but that she could manage John.

And then in the utter silence of the desert night, staring at the sinking moon, Rhoda asked herself why, when she should have been mad with joy over her own rescue, she was giving all her thoughts to Kut-le's plight! For a moment the question brought a flood of confusion. Then, standing alone in the night beauty of the desert, the girl acknowledged the truth that she had denied even to herself so long.

The young Indian's image returned to her endowed with all the dignity of his remarkable physical perfection. She knew now that from the first this physical beauty of his had had a strong appeal to her. She knew now that all his unusual characteristics that at first had seemed so strange to her were the ones that had drawn her to him. His strange mental honesty, his courage, his brutal incisiveness, his clear view-point, all had fascinated her. All her days with him returned to her—days of weakness, of anger; then the weeks on the ledge and the day when she had found the desert, and finally the day just past, to the very mo-

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ment when Billy Porter had found them on the ledge.

Rhoda stood with unseeing eyes while before her inward vision passed a magnificent panorama of the glories through which Kut-le had led her—chaos of mountain and desert resplendent with color; cool depth of canyon; burning height of tortured peak, depth of pungent piñon forest, all wrapped in the haze which is the desert's own.

Rhoda knew the truth; knew that she loved Kut-le! She knew that she loved him with all the passionate devotion for which her rebirth had given her the capacity.

With this acknowledgment all her calm was swept away. With fingers clasped against her breast, with wide eyes on the brooding night, she wished that she might tell him this that had come to her. If only once more the inscrutable tenderness of his black eyes were upon her! If the deep imperative voice were but sounding in her ears again! If only she could feel now the touch of his powerful arms as he carried her the long, sick miles to Chira. Trembling with longing, her gaze fell upon the man sleeping at her feet. She drew a sudden troubled breath. Must she renounce this new rapture of living? Must she?

"Have I found new life in the desert only to lose it?" she whispered. "Oh, Kut-le! Kut-le!"

DeWitt slept on, unmoving, and Rhoda watched him with tragedy-stricken eyes.

"What shall I do?" she whispered, lips quivering, shaking hands twisting together. "Oh, what shall I do?"

She tried to picture a future with Kut-le. She saw his tenderness, his purposefulness, the bigness of his mind and spirit. Then, with a cold clutch at her throat, came the thought of race barrier, and in a moment Rhoda was plunged into the oldest, the most hopeless, the least solvable of all love's problems. Minute after minute went by and the girl standing by the sleeping man fought a fight that shook her slender body and racked her soul. At last she raised her face to the sky.

"I want to do what is right," she said piteously. "It doesn't matter about me, if only I can decide what is right!" Then after a pause, "I will marry John! I will!" like a child that has been punished and promises to be good. Still another pause, then she said, "So that part of me is dead!" and she put her fingers before her eyes and fell to crying, not with the easy tears of a woman but with the deep agonizing sobs of a man over his dead.

"Kut-le, I wanted you! I wanted you for my mate! If I could have heard you, seen you, felt you once more, nothing else would have mattered, I wanted you!"

CHAPTER XXX

"ALONE, ALONE—ALL, ALL ALONE"

A LONG hour passed in which Rhoda sat in the sand, limp and quiescent, as though all but wrecked by the storm through which she had passed. Dawn came at last. The air was pregnant with new hope, with a vague uplifting of sense and being that told of the coming of a new day. The east quivered with prismatic colors and suddenly the sun appeared.

Rhoda rose and stooped over DeWitt to smooth the hair back from his forehead.

"Come," she said softly, "it's breakfast-time."

DeWitt sat up bewildered. Then his senses returned.

"Rhoda," he exclaimed, "what do you mean by this?"

Rhoda's smile was a little wan:

"You needed the rest and I didn't!"

DeWitt rose and shook himself like a great dog, then looked at Rhoda wonderingly.

"And you don't look much done up! But you had no right to do such a thing! I told you to give me ten minutes. I feel like a brute. Lie down now and get a little sleep yourself."

"Lie in the sun? Thank you, I'd rather push on to the camp and have some breakfast. How do you feel?"

"Much better! It was fine of you, dear, but it wasn't a fair deal."

"I'll be good from now on!" said Rhoda meekly. "What would you like for breakfast?"

DeWitt looked about him. Already the desert was assuming its brazen aspect.

"Water will be enough for me," he answered, "and nothing else. I am seriously considering a rigid diet for a time." They both drank sparingly of the water in Rhoda's canteen. "I have three shots in my Colt," said DeWitt, "but I want to save them for an emergency. But if we don't strike camp pretty soon, I'll try to pot a

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jack-rabbit—enough for one meal anyhow."

"We can eat desert mice," said Rhoda. "I know how to catch and cook them!"

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated DeWitt. "Let's start on at once, if you're not too tired."

So they began the day cheerfully. As the morning wore on and they found no trace of the camp, they began to watch the canteen carefully. Gradually their thirst became so great that the desire for food was quite secondary to it and they made no attempt to hunt for a rabbit. They agreed toward noon to save the last few drops in the canteen until they could no longer do without it.

Hour after hour they toiled in the blinding heat, the strange deep blue of the sky reflecting the brazen light of the desert. In their careful avoiding of the mountain where they had rested at sunset the night before, they gradually worked out into a wide barren space with dunes and rock-heaps interchanging.

"This won't do at all," said DeWitt at last, wearily. "We had better try for any old mountain at all in the hope of finding water."

They stood panting, staring at the distant haze of a peak. Trackless and tortuous, the way underfoot was incredibly difficult. Yet the distances melted in ephemeral slopes as lovely in their tints as they were accursed in their reality of cruelty. Rhoda, unaccustomed to day travel, panted and gasped as they walked. But she held her own fairly well, while DeWitt, sick and overstrained at the start, was failing rapidly.

"It's noon now," said John a little thickly. "You had better lie in the shade of that rock for an hour."

"You sleep too!" pleaded Rhoda.

"I'm too hot to sleep. I'll wake you in an hour."

When Rhoda awoke it was to see DeWitt leaning against the rock-heap, his lips swollen, his eyes uncertain. Weak and dizzy herself, she rose and laid her hand on John's, every maternal instinct in her stirring, speaking in her gray eyes.

"Come, dear boy, we mustn't give up so easily."

John lifted the little hand to his cheek.

"I won't give up," he said uncertainly. "I'll take care of you, honey girl!"

"Come on, then!" said Rhoda. "You see that queer bunch of cholla yonder? Let's get as far as that before we stop again!"

With a great effort DeWitt gathered himself together and, fixing his eyes on the fantastic cactus growth, he plodded desperately through the sand. At the cholla bunch, Rhoda pointed to a jutting lavender rock.

"At that we'll rest for a minute. Come on, John!"

John's sick eyes did not waver, but his trembling legs described many circles in their journey to the jutting rock. Distances were so many times what they seemed that Rhoda's little scheme carried them over a mile of desert before DeWitt sank to his knees.

"I'm a sick man" he said, huskily, as he fell prone.

SO NOTHING could have appeared more opportunely than this new hardship to take Rhoda's mind off her misery of the night. Nothing could have brought John so near to her as this utter helplessness which had come about through his toiling for her. She looked at him with tears of pity in her eyes, while her heart sank with fright. She knew the terrible danger that menaced them. But she closed her lips firmly and looked thoughtfully at the mite of water that remained to them. Then she held the canteen to DeWitt's lips. He pushed it away from him and in another moment or so he rose.

Rhoda, fastening their hopes to another distant cholla, led the way on again. But she too was growing a little light-headed. The distant cactus danced grotesquely and black spots flitted between her and the molten iron over which her fancy said they traveled. Suddenly she laughed crazily:

"'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe!'"

DeWitt laughed hoarsely.

"That's just the way it looks to me, Rhoda. But you're just as crazy as I am."

Rhoda jerked herself together and tried to moisten her lips with her swollen tongue.

"We must take it turn about. When you are crazy I must try to be sane!"

"Good idea!" croaked DeWitt, "only I'm crazy all the time!

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"'O frabjous day! Calloo! Collay!'
He chortled in his joy!'"

Rhoda patted his hand.

"Poor John! Oh, my poor John! I was not worth all this. You may not have an Apache's strength, but your heart is right!" Two great tears rolled down her cheeks.

DeWitt looked at her seriously.

"You aren't as dry as I am. I haven't enough moisture in me to moisten my eyeballs, let alone cry! I am so cracked and dry that you will have to soak me in the first spring we come to before I'll hold water."

Rhoda laughed weakly and John turned away with a hurt look.

"It's not a joke!" he said.

How long they were, in their staggering, circuitous course, in reaching their goal of cholla, Rhoda never knew. She knew that each heavy foot, tingling and scorched, seemed to drag her back a step for every one that she took forward. She knew that she repeatedly offered the last of their water to John, and that he repeatedly refused it, urging it on her. She knew that the pulp of the barrel cactus that she tried to chew turned to bitter sawdust in her mouth and sickened her.

Then suddenly, as she struggled to refocus her wandering wits on the cholla, it appeared within touch of her hand. Afraid to pause, she adopted a new goal in a far mesa, and clutching DeWitt's unresponsive fingers she struggled forward.

And so on and on toward a never-nearing goal, now falling, now rising, now pausing to strive to hush DeWitt's cracked voice that wandered aimlessly through all the changes of verse that seemed to his delirium appropriate to the occasion. It seemed to Rhoda that her own brain was reeling as she watched the illimitable space through which they moved. John's voice did not cease:

"Alone, alone,—all, all alone;
Alone on a wide, wide sea.
So lonely 'twas, that God Himself
Scarce seemèd there to be."

"Hush, John, hush!" pleaded Rhoda.

"'Alone! Alone! All, all alone!'" repeated the croaking voice.

"But I'm with you, John!" Rhoda pleaded, but DeWitt rambled on unheeding.

The way grew indescribably rough. The desert floor became a series of sand-dunes, a rise and fall of sea-like billows over which they climbed like ants over a new-plowed field. In the hollow of each wave they rested, sinking in the sand, where, breathless and scorching, the air scintillated above their motionless forms. At the crest of each they rested again, the desert wind hurtling the hot sand against their parched skins.

Frequently John refused to rise, and Rhoda in her half delirium would sink beside him until the mist lifted from her brain and once more the distant mesa forced itself upon her vision.

"Come, John, we shall soon be there. We can't keep on this way forever and not reach some place. Please come, dear!"

"'He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul——'"

"Perhaps there will be water there! Oh, John, dear John, if you love me, come!"

"I don't love you, little boy! I love Rhoda Tuttle.

"Oh, for a draught of vintage that hath been
Cooled a long age in deep delved earth!"

"Please, John. I'm so sick!"

The man, after two or three attempts, staggered to his feet and stood swaying.

"God help me!" he said, "I can do no more!"

"Yes, you can, John! Yes, you can! Perhaps there is a whole fountain of water there on the mesa!"

The glazed look returned to DeWitt's eyes. "'Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,'" he muttered, "'or the wheel broken at the cistern—or the pitcher broken at the fountain, or the wheel——'"

Rhoda threw her arm across her eyes.

"Oh, not that, John! I can't bear that one!"

Again she stood upon the roof at Chira, looking up into Kut-le's face. Again the low wailing of the Indian women and the indescribable depth and hunger of those dear black eyes. Again the sense of protection and content in his nearness.

"Oh, Kut-le! Kut-le!" she moaned.

Instantly sanity returned to John's eyes.

"Why did you say Kut-le?" he demanded thickly. "Were you thinking of him?"

"Yes," answered Rhoda simply. "Come on, John!"

DeWitt struggled on bravely to the crest of the next dune. "I hate that Apache

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devil!" he muttered. "I am going to kill him!"

Rhoda quickly saw the magic of Kut-le's name.

"Why should you want to kill Kut-le?" she asked as DeWitt paused at the top of the next dune.

Instantly he started on.

"Because I hate him! I hate him, the devil!"

"See how near the mesa is, John! Only a little way! Kut-le would say we were poor stuff."

"No doubt! Well, I'll let a gun give him my opinion of him!"

The sand-dunes had indeed beaten themselves out against the wall of a giant mesa. Rhoda followed blindly along the wall and stumbled upon a precipitous trail leading upward.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE FORGOTTEN CITY

UP THIS tortuous trail Rhoda staggered, closely followed by DeWitt. At a level spot the girl paused.

"Water, John! Water!" she cried.

The two threw themselves down and drank of the bubbling spring until they could hold no more. Then Rhoda lay down on the sun-warmed rocks and sleep overwhelmed her.

She opened her eyes to stare into a yellow moon that floated liquidly above her. Whether she had slept through a night and a day or whether but a few hours had elapsed since she had staggered to the spring beside which she lay, she could not tell. She lay looking up into the sky languidly, but with clear mind. A deep sigh roused her. DeWitt sat on the other side of the spring, rubbing his eyes.

"Hello!" he said in a hoarse croak. "How did we land here?"

"I led us here some time in past ages. When or how, *quién sabe?*" answered Rhoda. "John, we must find food somehow."

"Drink all the water you can, Rhoda," said DeWitt; "it helps some and I'll pot a rabbit. What a fool I am! You poor girl! More hardships for you!"

Rhoda dipped her burning face into the water, then lifted it, dripping.

"If only you won't be delirious, John, I can stand the hardships."

DeWitt looked at the girl curiously.

"Was I delirious? And you were alone leading me across that Hades out there? Rhoda, dear, you make me ashamed of myself!"

"I don't see how you were to blame," answered Rhoda, stoutly. "Think what you have been doing for me!"

John rose stiffly:

"Do you feel equal to climbing this trail with me to find where we are, or had you rather stay here?"

"I don't want to stay here alone," answered Rhoda.

Very slowly and weakly they started up the trail. The spring was on a broad stone terrace. Above it rose another terrace, weathered and disrupted until, in the moonlight, it looked like an impregnable castle wall, embattled and embuttressed. But clinging to the seemingly invulnerable fortress was the trail, a snake-like shadow in the moonlight.

"Perhaps we had better stay at the spring until morning," suggested Rhoda, her weak legs flagging.

"Not with the hope of food a hundred feet above us," answered John firmly. "This trail is worn six inches into the solid rock. My guess is that there are some inhabitants here. It's queer that they haven't discovered us."

Slowly and without further protest Rhoda followed DeWitt up the trail. Deep-worn and smooth though it was, they accomplished the task with infinite difficulty. Rhoda, stumbling like a sleep-sodden child, wondered whether ever again she were to accomplish physical feats with the magical ease with which Kut-le endowed her.

"If he were here, I'd know I was to tumble into a comfortable camp," she thought. Then, with a remorseful glance at DeWitt's patient back, "What a selfish beast you are, Rhoda Tuttle!"

She reached John's side and together they paused at the top of the trail. Black against the sky, the moon crowning its top with a frost-like radiance, was a huge flat-topped building. Night-birds circled about it. From black openings in its front owls hooted. But otherwise there was neither sight nor sound of living thing. The desert far below and beyond lay like a sea of death. Rhoda unconsciously drew nearer to DeWitt.

"Where are the dogs? At Chira the dogs

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barked all night. Indians always have dogs!"

"It must be very late," whispered DeWitt. "Even the dogs are asleep."

"And at Chira," went on Rhoda, whispering as did DeWitt, "owls didn't hoot from the windows."

"Let's go closer," said John.

Rhoda thrust cold little fingers into his hand.

THE doors were empty and forlorn. The terraced walls, built with the patient labor of the long ago, were sagged and decayed. Riot of greasewood crowned great heaps of débris. A loneliness as of the end of the world came upon the two wanderers. Sick and dismayed they stood in awe before this grandeur of the past.

"*Whoo! Whoo!*" an owl's cry sounded from the black window openings.

DeWitt spoke softly:

"Rhoda, it's one of the forgotten cities!"

"Let's go back! Let's go back to the spring," pleaded Rhoda. "It is so uncanny in the dark."

"No!" DeWitt rubbed his aching head wearily. "I must contrive some sort of a shelter for you. Almost anything is better than another night in the open desert. Come on! We will explore a little."

"Let's wait till morning," begged Rhoda. "I'm so cold and shivery."

"Dear sweetheart, that's just the point. You will be sick if you don't have some sort of shelter from this wind. You have suffered enough. Will you sit here and let me look about?"

"No! No! I don't want to be left alone."

Rhoda followed John closely up into the mass of fallen rock.

DeWitt smiled. It appealed to the tenderest part of his nature that the girl who had led him through the terrible experiences of the desert should show fear, now that a haven was reached.

"Come on, little girl," he said.

Painfully, for they both were weak and dizzy, they clambered to a gaunt opening in the gray wall. Rhoda clutched John's arm with a little scream as a bat whirred close by them. Within the opening DeWitt scratched one of his carefully hoarded matches. The tiny flare revealed a small adobe-walled room quite bare save for broken bits of pottery on the floor. John lighted a handful of greasewood and by its brilliant light they examined the floor and walls.

"What a clean, dry little room!" exclaimed Rhoda. "Oh, I am so tired and sleepy!"

"Let's look a little farther before we stop. What's on the other side of this broken wall?"

They picked their way across the litter of pottery and peered into another room, the duplicate of the first.

"How will these do for our respective sleeping-rooms?" asked DeWitt.

Rhoda stared at John with horror in her eyes.

"I'd as soon sleep in a tomb! Let's make a fire outside and sleep under the stars. I'd rather have sleep than food just now."

"It will have to be just a tiny smudge up behind this débris, where Kut-le can't spot it," answered DeWitt. "I won't mind having a red eye of fire for company. It will help to keep me awake."

"But you must sleep," protested Rhoda.

"But I mustn't," answered John grimly. "I've played the baby act on this picnic as much as I propose to. It is my trick at the wheel."

Too weary to protest further, Rhoda threw herself down with her feet toward the fire and pillowed her head on her arm. DeWitt filled his pipe and sat puffing it, with his arms folded across his knees. Rhoda watched him for a moment or two. She found herself admiring the full forehead, the lines of refinement about the lips that the beard could not fully conceal.

"He's not as handsome as Kut-le," she thought wearily, "but he's—he's——"

Before her thought was completed she was asleep.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE SCALES OF LOVE

RHODA awoke at dawn and lay waiting for the stir of the squaws about the morning meal. Then with a start she rose and looked soberly about her. Suddenly she smiled and murmured,

"Tenderfoot!"

DeWitt lay fast asleep by the ashes of the fire.

"If Kut-le——" she thought. Then she stopped abruptly and stamped her foot. "You are not even to think of Kut-le any

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more," she murmured, and with her cleft chin very firm, she descended the trail to the spring. When she returned, DeWitt was rising stiffly to his feet.

"Hello!" he cried. "I was good this time. I never closed my eyes till dawn. I'm so hungry I could eat greasewood. How do you feel?"

"Weak with hunger, but otherwise very well. Go wash your face, Johnny."

DeWitt grinned and started down the trail obediently. But Rhoda laid a detaining hand on his arm. The sun was but a moment high. All the mesa front lay in purple shadows, though farther out the desert glowed with the yellow light of a new day.

"I think animals come to the spring to drink," said Rhoda. "There were tiny wet footmarks there when I went down to wash my face."

"Bully!" exclaimed John. "Wait now; let's watch."

The two dropped to the ground and peered over the edge of the upper terrace. The spring bubbled forth serenely, followed its shallow trough a short distance, then disappeared into the insatiable floor of the desert. For several moments the two lay watching until at last Rhoda grew restless. DeWitt laid a detaining hand on her arm.

"Hush!" he whispered.

A pair of jack-rabbits loped up the trail, sniffed the air tentatively, then, with forelegs in the water, drank greedily. DeWitt's right arm stiffened, there were two puffs of smoke, and the two kicking rabbits rolled into the spring.

"I'm beginning to have a little self-respect as the man of the party," said DeWitt, as he blew the smoke from his Colt.

Rhoda ran down to the spring and lifted the two wet little bodies. John took them from her.

"If you'll find some place for a table, I'll bring these up in no time."

When DeWitt came up from the spring with the dressed rabbits, he found a little fire glowing between two rocks. Near by, on a big flat-topped stone, were set forth two flat-bottomed earthen bowls, with a brown water-jar in the center. As he stared, Rhoda came out of the building with interested face.

"Look, John! See what I found on a little corner shelf!" She held in her outstretched hand a tiny jar no bigger than a wine-glass. It was of an exquisitely polished black. "Not even an explorer can have been here, or nothing so perfect as this would have been left. What hands do you suppose made this!"

But DeWitt did not answer her question.

"Now look here, Rhoda, you aren't to do anything like starting a fire and lugging these heavy jars again! You're not with the Indians now. You've got a man to wait on you."

Rhoda looked at him curiously.

"But I've learned to like to do it!" she protested. "Nobody can roast a rabbit to suit me but myself!"

And in spite of DeWitt's protests she spitted the rabbits and would not let him tend the fire, which she said was too fine an art for his untrained hands. In a short time the rich odor of roasting flesh rose on the air and John watched the pretty cook with admiration mingled with perplexity. Rhoda insisting on cooking a meal! More than that, Rhoda evidently enjoying the job! The idea left him speechless.

An hour after Rhoda had spitted the game, John sighed with contentment as he looked at the pile of bones beside his earthen bowl.

"And they say jacks aren't good eating!" he said. "Why, if they had been salted they would have been better than any game I ever ate!"

"You never were so hungry before," said Rhoda. "Still, they were well roasted, now weren't they?"

"Your vanity is colossal, Miss Tuttle," laughed John, "but I will admit that I never saw better roasting." Then he said soberly, "I believe we had better not try the trail again to-day, Rhoda, dear. We don't know where to go and we've no supplies. We'd better get our strength up, resting here to-day, and to-morrow start in good shape."

RHODA looked wistfully from the shade of the pueblo out over the desert. She had become very, very tired of this endless fleeing.

"I wish the Newmans' ranch were just over beyond," she said. "John, what will you do if Kut-le comes on us here?"

DeWitt's forehead burned a painful red.

"I have a shot left in my revolver," he said.

Rhoda walked over and put one hand on

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his shoulder as he sat looking up at her with somber blue eyes.

"John," she said, "I want you to promise me that you will fire at Kut-le only in the last extremity to keep him from carrying me off, and that you will shoot only as Porter did, to lame and not kill!"

John's jaws came together and he returned the girl's scrutiny with a steel-like glance.

"Why do you plead for him?" he asked finally.

"He saved my life," she answered simply.

John rose and walked up and down restlessly.

"Rhoda, if a white man had done this thing I would shoot him as I would a dog. What do I care for law in a case like this? We were men long before we had laws. Why should this Indian be let go when he has done what a white would be shot for?"

Rhoda looked at him keenly.

"You talk as if in your heart you knew you were going to kill him because he is an Indian and were trying to justify yourself for it!"

John turned on the girl a look so haunted, so miserable, yet so determined that her heart sank. For a time there was silence, each afraid to speak. At last Rhoda said coolly:

"Will you get fresh water while I bank in the fire?"

DeWitt's face relaxed. He smiled a little grimly:

"I'll do anything for you but that one thing—promise not to kill the Indian."

"The desert has changed us both, John," said Rhoda. "It has taken the veneer off both of us."

"Maybe so," replied DeWitt. "I only know that that Apache must pay for the hell you and I have lived through."

"Look at me, John!" cried Rhoda. "Can't you realize that the good Kut-le has done me has been greater than his affront to me? Do you see how well I am, how strong? Oh, if I could only make you see what a different world I live in! You would have been tied to an invalid, John, if Kut-le hadn't stolen me! Think now of all I can do for you! Of the home I can make, of the work I can do!"

DeWitt answered tersely:

"I'm mighty glad you're well, but only for your own sake and because I can have you longer. I don't want you to work for me. I'll do all the working that's done in our family!"

"But," protested Rhoda, "that's just keeping me lazy and selfish!"

"You couldn't be selfish if you tried. You pay your way with your beauty. When I think of that Apache devil having the joy of you all this time, watching you grow back to health, taking care of you, carrying you, it makes me feel like a caveman. I could kill him with a club! Thank heaven, the lynch law can hold in this forsaken spot! And there isn't a man in the country but will back me up, not a jury that would find me guilty!"

Rhoda sat in utter consternation. The power of the desert to lay bare the human soul appalled her. This was a DeWitt that the East never could have shown her. It sickened her as she realized that no words of hers could sway this man; to realize that she was trying to stay with her feeble feminine hands passions that were as old a world-force as love itself. All her new-found strength seemed inadequate to solve this new problem.

To be continued.

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The Wreck of the *Tawas*.

by W. G. Steiner*

SAMUEL S. HARKINS picked a letter from the big desk at which he directed the destinies of the East & West Steamship Company and looked at it for a long time with a formidable frown. When Harkins frowned he was always formidable. With his tight, heavy jaw and his black, sharp eyes he looked just what he was described to be by some of the steamboat men who had known him a long time—one who would go "through hell and high water" to accomplish a purpose.

For many years now his sole interest had been to swell the earnings of the East & West Company. When he frowned it was a good bet that the matter bore in some way on dividends. The letter before him was, in fact, a refusal of the Thunder Cape & Hancock Steamship Company to consider the purchase of the *City of Tawas*, the oldest boat of the East & West fleet.

His desire to sell rose from the fact that the magnificent new million-dollar floating palace, the *Majestic*, was already launched and would be ready to open the next season. And unless he got rid of the *Tawas*, or it should be providentially wrecked by one of the late-season storms that always sweep the Great Lakes with such fury, it would go on the junk-heap, a dead loss. The boat had just scraped through its last annual inspection, and other managers were all too wise to buy.

"The old brute is well insured," thought Harkins. "If she were thrown on a reef somewhere, we'd get a good price from the underwriters."

He continued to stare at the paper. Then he banged his fist on the desk and pushed one of the several buttons before him. In a second an office-boy was through the door.

"Tell Captain Parker of the *Imperial* to come here at once," he ordered.

The boy went out and aboard the great side-wheeler that lay alongside the dock. The *Imperial*, though it would be exceeded in elegance and carrying capacity by the *Majestic*, was now the finest of the fleet. There were heavy carpets in its saloons, and its interior finish was of mahogany and gold.

Captain Jimmy Parker, stalwart, clean-cut, with hair just turning gray, was its commander. He was the senior captain of the fleet, as well as the most competent. It was he who had been picked to sail the *Majestic* when it should be in commission. Then he would be in charge of the finest steamer on the lakes, and his salary would be commensurate with the distinction.

Receiving the general manager's message, he went ashore at once and took his six feet of sturdy, clear-eyed manhood into the elaborately fitted office of his chief.

"Hello, Jim; take this chair," said the general manager, arranging it for him. "Have a cigar," he added, pulling a fat, expensive one from his case and handing it over.

"I put your appointment as master of

* See page 411.

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the *Majestic* before the board of directors at the last meeting, Jim, and they confirmed it. They left me to set the salary. I've decided to raise you a thousand a year. You'll have the best job any sailor on these lakes ever had."

"That certainly is good news," said the Captain, smiling all over. "And I want to tell you I appreciate it. I——"

"That's all right, Jim," Harkins broke in. "Now let's get down to something closer at hand. It has already begun to get cold—it's November third already, and the *Imperial* is losing money for us on your run. She always does at this time of year. You know you've been carrying only a little freight, a few traveling salesmen and some cheap passengers who take the boat to save railroad fare. Most of them don't even hire berths, but sit up in the cabin all night.

"So instead of keeping the *Imperial* on the run to the end of the season and taking the loss, as we usually do, I'm going to put the *City of Tawas* on until navigation closes. We can operate her at half the expense. I want you to take charge of her."

"But Holy Smoke, Sam," the Captain replied, "that little, rotten old hull will never stand those late-season storms! We'll lose her sure."

"Jim," said the general manager, laying his hand on the sailor's thigh and speaking in a low tone, "I don't care if we do. She's well covered by insurance. I haven't been able to sell her. And I'm putting you on her because if she is lost you are the one man in the fleet capable of losing her neatly. We don't want any crew or passengers drowned. There are lots of reefs down there among those islands——"

He stopped.

Captain Parker took off his blue uniform cap and passed his hand over his brow.

"Whew! I don't like this, Sam," he said.

"I don't like it any better than you do," replied the general manager, "but it's got to be done, and you are the one man I can trust to obey orders and keep your mouth shut. Besides, you've got a lot at stake now. We'll put the *Tawas* on the run the first of the week."

And before Captain Parker had fully cleared his mind for action the conference was over and he was going through the door. Outside he stopped and rubbed his hand over his forehead again, turned half around as though to go back into the office, and then pulled himself away and walked down-stairs.

He had a wife, a daughter, and two boys he planned to send to a technical school so that they might become marine architects. Besides, his sailor's pride bid him do nothing that might lose him the command of the *Majestic*. As Harkins had said, he had a lot at stake.

IN THREE days they had laid up the *Imperial* for the Winter, and Captain Parker with Bennington, his first mate, and half his crew had taken charge of the *Tawas*. The men who had been operating that boat left it with sighs of relief, untouched by any resentment at being displaced. For the rest of the month Captain Parker ran the *Tawas* back and forth through the islands, whose Summertime green had already turned to dull brown and gray. He didn't see Harkins during that time; perhaps because, unconsciously, he tried to avoid the general manager.

His face lost much of its rosy cheerfulness. He was curt and short spoken, and at times burst into unaccustomed profanity at men who had sailed with him for years.

His hand, too, had lost some of its cunning. In rivers and canals, captains are supposed to remain on the bridge in charge of their ships, but one morning he did not leave his room until Bennington had run the boat all the way up the river to Quarry Crossing, the narrowest, shallowest passage on the lakes. A big ore-carrying freighter was coming down and had just whistled that it would pass to port.

Bennington's hand was on the whistle-cord to accept the signal when the Captain came rushing up, took charge of the boat, and crossed the signal of the approaching steamer. Immediately the latter stopped its engines in the face of imminent danger of grounding on the channel bank, and at the same moment let loose a volley of distress and danger signals.

The two ships missed hitting each other by a hair's breadth; and the Captain of the freighter shouted anathemas through his megaphone as he went by. It was the crudest, most dangerous mistake a navigator in those waters could make—enough to cost some men their papers if it were reported.

"Bennington, you infernal idiot, why didn't you tell me?" Parker roared at the

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faithful mate. Bennington flushed and looked away, accepting silently the odium of a blunder that was not his.

After that the Captain's irritation grew steadily.

November, with its drab, horizonless skies was nearly gone. It had been singularly free from heavy storms. There were now only two weeks left of the season. And the *Tawas* still creaked and groaned from one end of its run to the other.

But the bad weather came. One night a gale swept in from the northwest. It roared and shrieked about the warehouses alongside of which the *Tawas* was lying. The temperature was near zero, and the fine snow stung as it hit the faces of the dock-wallopers who were putting aboard the last of the freight.

A limousine drove down on to the pier and the general manager got out. He walked hurriedly over the gangplank and went to the purser's window.

"Not many to-night, eh, Fred?" he asked.

"Only three rooms taken, and the passengers aren't aboard yet. Maybe some of them will be scared out. There's a Polish woman with six little kids in the main saloon—going to stay there all night, of course."

"Well, it's a fierce night," said Harkins. "Where's Parker?"

"In his room, I guess," replied the purser, and Harkins made his way there without delay.

He rapped on the door and then stepped in. His tight, heavy jaw seemed more prominent than usual as he shot his quick look of greeting at Parker.

"This is a raging night, Jim," he said by way of opening.

"Yes," replied the Captain, and said no more.

"If the old boat gets into trouble you won't have many to take off—a Polish woman with some kids, and a couple of traveling men. How's she been standing up?"

"Pretty good," said the Captain.

He acquiesced shortly to all the remarks of the general manager, but he injected nothing into their conversation on his own account.

"Well, good luck to you, Jim, old man," Harkins said finally, slapping the Captain on the back.

II

LAND Captain Parker knew as well as though he had been told in so many words that he was not expected into port the next morning with the *Tawas*. He strolled abstractedly out through the cabins. For several minutes he stood looking at the Polish woman and her untidy brood, though he scarcely saw them. Then suddenly he gritted his teeth, closed his hands into two fists and strode to his room with a suddenly energetic stride. Getting into his overcoat, he went to the bridge.

The wind lashed his face and drove the snow into his eyes. Waves in the river were running three feet high; they slashed viciously about the bow. The rigging buzzed and snapped and groaned about him.

Bennington joined him just as the lines were loosed and the steamer moved out into the river.

"We'll have some fun getting through to-night," he said.

"Never mind. We'll get through all right, if this is the last trip I sail for this line!" answered the Captain.

He was more cheerful than he had seemed for weeks. And Bennington wondered why, if he got through, it need be his last trip for the line.

They moved down the river in the painful cold of the scourging storm. They passed the Fighting Islands lights, moved out beyond Bar Point and entered the maddened chaos of the lake. The ship, taking the onslaught on its quarter, groaned and rolled. Spray, heavy and drenching, flew over the upper works and froze where it struck. The decks were a rushing torrent of icy water.

"I'll stay with her to-night, Bennington. You go below. Or no! Hold on. Get in the pilot-house and stay there. I may need you."

The mate made his way down the swaying ladder-way, already heavily glazed with ice, and entered the wheelsman's turret. A half-hour later he, with the wheelsman, was a prisoner there. For the foam that gushed over the bow with every wave spread over the woodwork and turned to ice, until the ship was covered with a thick, glass-like covering. The pilot-house doors were frozen shut.

The bridge was higher and less water

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reached it, but the Captain's coat was soon as stiff as a suit of armor, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that the man within could move about.

In the cabin the creaking of the old hull was terrifying. Fright had seized the little Polish woman and her brood at the first plunge into the angry lake. The movement of the vessel became more vicious and the crash of the water more threatening. The woman gathered her little ones about her and sank, crossing herself, before a dingy upholstered seat. Then she began a frantic, shrieking prayer in her native tongue.

The black cabin-boy was scarcely less scared. He rolled up a rug on the floor and laid his head on it, burying his white, staring eyes and his ebony face in his arms.

"My Gawd!" he gasped, "this is the wust I've seen!"

Above, Parker's voice as it came down the tube to the wheelsman was calm and self-possessed, as it had not been for weeks.

"Put her over to south, two points west," he roared.

"Whew! That's better," murmured the wheelsman. "He's going through the south passage. We never would have got across on the regular course."

The south passage led through the thickest of the group of rocky reef-bound islands that spot that part of the lake. It was narrow, and in some places perilous. But with the wind as it blew that night, it would be somewhat sheltered from the gale that roared over the open lake. And besides, as soon as the *Tawas* changed its course, it received the buffetings of the enormous breakers further astern. Still they dashed water over the decks as they had before, and kept her all a-tremble.

The narrows of the south channel were, in some places, unprotected from the onslaught of the storm. Bennington and the wheelsman held their breath a dozen times, as the *Tawas* was picked up by a crashing wave and its whole bulk hurled at some hidden reef or rock ledge. But somehow they always missed. The Captain seemed to calculate in advance every cross current, every antic of the sea, and to meet it with a certain strategy.

"This is a trip!" Bennington's admiration broke forth. "I never saw the old man do a prettier job."

There were a hundred places among those islands where the ship could, by a slight variation from its course, have been beached with its bottom broken in and her crew still been safe aboard her till relief came. But that didn't happen.

DAYLIGHT found the boat away from the islands and battling across the gray lake. Ice on her in some places was a foot thick. The ship dove and plunged in the sea like a great crystal toy.

The Captain still stood his watch unrelieved. For the cabin-doors had long been frozen shut and none could reach him had he wished.

At last, in the distance, the outline of the canal piers at the harbor were visible over the foaming ridges of rushing water. Beneath his helmet of ice the Captain smiled grimly.

Soon the straining eyes aboard the *Tawas* made out in the shallow water beside the piers a red spot, and along the shore there was a long line of unaccustomed black.

"Bennington, what is that near the pier?" the Captain demanded through the tube. In the pilot-house the mate had binoculars at his hand.

"It's a big steel freighter broke in two," he reported. "The life-savers are taking her crew off in a breeches-buoy. There must be half the town, hundreds of thousands of people, on the shore watching the work. There are four or five tugs just inside the piers, afraid to come out, I take it."

The seas here were higher and the wind more vicious than it had been anywhere on the trip. The old steamer was heavily freighted with ice, distributed so unevenly that it listed heavily to port, and the bow was unnaturally low. It was becoming increasingly hard to keep on its course.

Soon the Captain himself could see the traveling breeches making trip after trip from the rigging of the wrecked freighter to the shore. Each time one more man went to safety. And as they came to shore a great surge of joy ran through packed thousands of onlookers along the beach.

It was plain to him that the red freighter had crashed against the pier as it had attempted to enter the harbor. It had been broken in two and had swung around outside the entrance and been washed up on the beach. The wrecked boat had been caught trying to do just what he had now to do—enter the narrow canal with the terrific force of the storm on his quarter!

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With his ice-coated, half unmanageable old hulk the chances were greatly against him. But to stay longer in the open lake was impossible.

"Bennington," he called down the tube in a voice that was becoming husky with exhaustion, "you take the wheel."

"Aye, sir," was the mate's answer.

Now the crowd on the shore had shifted its attention from the rescuing of the freighter's crew and glued its eyes on the white ice-clad ship that approached so uncertainly toward its gamble with death! It gasped at the stalwart figure on the bridge dressed in a shining garment of ice. Would this steamer, too, be crushed on the piers, before their very eyes?

The tugs in shelter moved out to the limits of safe water and lay by to give aid if it was needed.

The *Tawas* reeled and staggered toward the narrow canal like a drunken man aiming at a door. Then, suddenly, as it came abreast of the opening it made a long diagonal rush on the crest of a wave. A great cry broke from the crowd. It had crashed against the pier.

In a moment the hull had swung free and slipped into the calmer water between the piers. But there was a hole in the bottom. It took only a minute for the tugs to get alongside. Their crews, armed with axes, furiously attacked the cabin doors, chopping through the ice. They had them open.

Then across the slippery deck and over the side they carried the Polish woman and her children. Two traveling men with their grips followed, and one by one the crew, from the stokers to the black cabin-boy, were taken to safety on the smaller boats.

The tug-men slashed their way into the pilot-house, and Bennington and the wheelsman were released. The mate sprang at once to the bridge. He went straight to the glass-clad man who was leaning uncertainly against the rail. It must have been a superhuman labor just to support the weight of his clothes all night on that swaying bridge. The mate and three others carried him down the treacherous stairway and put him over the side of the sinking boat on to the deck of a tug.

THE smaller boats had scarcely left the side of the *Tawas* when, with a plunge and gurgle, the old steamer disappeared. The tug-men had to use their axes on the Captain's overcoat before they got him out. Then they fed him whisky gruel and wrapped him in warm blankets. At the dock they loaded him into a taxicab and sent him, with Bennington, to a hotel.

Harkins came into town that afternoon by train. He was flushed and he rubbed his hands exultantly as he entered the room where Captain Jimmy lay alone, in bed.

"Jimmy, that's the slickest thing that ever was done on these lakes," he said. "After fighting all the way across that lake to sink the old tub before all that mob! Gad! Have you seen the papers? They're full of your pictures and the story of the desperate fight you made to save your boat. Everybody has fallen for it. I'll make that raise of yours fifteen hundred when you take the *Majestic* next year."

Captain Parker's voice, weak though it was, sounded harsh and terrible when he raised himself on one elbow and looked with furious eyes at his superior:

"You —— —— snake!" he roared. "It was an accident. I'm no wrecker. I won't take your boat next year. I'll run a tug if I have to. You get out of here and take your job with you!"

And Harkins went. But for some time after that he seemed to be a more subdued and less self-confident man. A few months later he resigned quietly from the general managership of the East & West Company and left a secret recommendation for his successor that Captain Jimmy Parker be hired to run the *Majestic*. And under the new conditions the Captain accepted.

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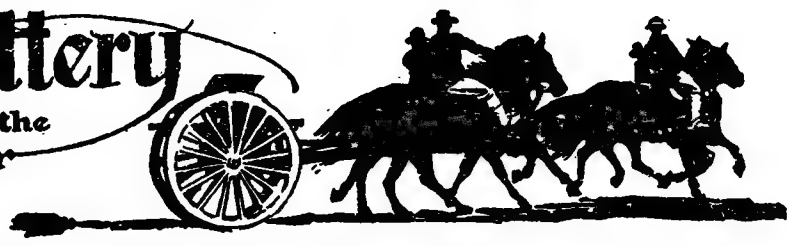
The "Milk-Cart" Battery

A tale of the Boer War



by L. Warburton*

"CONFOUND that gun! It's always in trouble. Get the —— thing away! Pack it off somehow. Keep under cover, you on the left! Lively, lads, lively, we can't wait much longer!"

The firing became hotter, and the bullets were clipping up the dust all round the Colt gun. Lieutenant the Honorable Asheton-Smith roared at the gun-team as he saw the Boers racing down the opposite slope, making for an adjacent *kopje*, where, once established, they could command the little British party and cut off the retreat.

The position was a precarious one for Troop A of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts. Obedient to orders, they had hung to the position on which was centered a galling fire, in order that the slow-moving ox-wagons of the Army Transport Service might cross the bad drift on the Wilge River and get safely over the next ridge.

The whole of De Wet's commando seemed to be intent on preventing the escape of the wagons, which had been held at the drift through one team's becoming bogged, and the Boers were pressing heavily on the little rear-guard. The Britishers had hung to the sun-baked ridge, at heavy cost, and, now that the wagons were safe, Lieutenant Smith was anxious to lose no time in retiring to the next position, where he could make a stand, in keeping with the tactics of fighting a rear-guard action.

The firing had been hot for some time, but now it increased from one direction, while a suspicious lull in another showed the young officer that the Boers had discovered that the machine-gun was out of action, as it generally was at a critical moment, and they were rushing the right flank in an effort to cut off the retreat The gun crew worked strenuously to get the weapon in action again, but it was hopelessly jammed, and to make matters worse, a careless trooper had let the mules wander.

Troop A could not retire until the gun was safely away. It was against all army tradition to leave a gun in the enemy's hands, but unless something was done, and done quickly, this was what would happen, or the whole troop would have to stay with it and be wiped out. The gun would be of little service to the Boers—probably it would kill the first man that tried to work it—and, so far as an actual loss was concerned, no one on the British side would have worried if the Colt stayed where it was.

The look of the thing and the adherence to tradition counted, however, and the young lieutenant swore while the crew sweated, and the troopers hugged the hot ant-hills that gave them shelter from the deadly hail of Mauser bullets. After a desperate chase the mules were captured, the disgraced gun was hurriedly strapped on its pack, and with a "For ——'s sake, hurry yourselves!" from the officer, the crew took the gun out of action at a brisk trot.

Seeing the gun slowly reach the top of the next ridge, out of the danger zone, Lieutenant Smith gave the order to retire. The men threw themselves on their waiting horses, and galloped off just as the Boers dashed for the ridge vacated not a moment too soon by the Scouts.

*See page 409.

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II

"I TELL you what it is, sir," said Lieutenant Smith to the Major, as they chatted at the mess that night, after the day's strenuous fighting, "that —— gun is going to cost you half your men yet. It's a menace to our safety. Upon my honor it is, and as a special favor, sir, I would ask you not to send it out with my troop again."

"Why, what's the matter with it, Mr. Smith?" the Major asked with a smile.

"Oh, I think you know pretty well, Major," the young officer replied. "No one seems to understand it. It jams when you least expect it, or something else goes wrong, and packing and unpacking it is too slow. You can't get it away quickly enough when you have to bolt as I did to-day. I wouldn't be sorry to see the —— fool thing fall into the river with its mules, and stay there. Cost me some of my best men to-day. Already it's cost more lives than it's worth, and the way the Colonel looks at it one would think it was as good as a battery of horse artillery. Anyway, sir, I don't want the thing again with me, and the men will surely do something to it, if they get a chance, to keep it out of the firing-line."

The whole mess laughed at Smith's tone of disgust when he gave his opinion of the gun which had been sent up by some war official, who had probably received a fat commission for having purchased it, with several dozen more, from the smart Yankee salesman down in Cape Town.

"All right, Smith," said the Major, smiling, "we'll send it out with Francis tomorrow, he'll have charge of the advance guard."

"Thanks, Major, I don't want the contraption. You'd better stick it on one of the wagons to scare off the 'wagon scouts'. There're too many of those gentry coming in every day with lamed horses, so that they can dodge the firing."

A further hearty laugh greeted the expression of Lieutenant Francis's opinion of the value of the gun.

We, of Kitchener's Fighting Scouts, an irregular corps of rough-riders, crack shots, and soldiers of fortune, recruited in Cape Town from all the flotsam and jetsam of blood-letters and glory-hunters that drifted to that South African port during the stubborn contest between Briton and Boer for supremacy in Africa, were attached to Colonel De Lisle's moving column, operating in the Orange Free State against the best and cleverest of the Boer fighters, General De Wet.

We had chased him, and been chased by him, all over the State. Like the rest of the fighting brigades which Lord Roberts had set in motion to force the Boers to submission after their armies, as organized fighting forces, had been broken up and guerilla warfare had begun, we were meeting with little success. We traversed the country from end to end and side to side, fighting by day and making surprise marches in the darkness of the bitterly cold nights. Our captures of stock and supplies were large, but we could never bring the Boers to anything like a decisive action. Our orders from Kitchener, who conducted war on the lines of the old Hebrew generals, were to fight the Boers whenever we met them, remove the women and children from their homes, so that they could not offer sustenance and comfort to the burghers on trek, bring in all the stock that we could, kill the rest, and burn the farmhouses.

In effect, the orders were "Burn, slay and ravage," and we obeyed them as best we could. It was cruel, but it was war, and war, to be effective, must always be cruel. Looking back on it now, it seems that there was a lot of unnecessary waste of lives, destruction of valuable property, and cruelty; but such is war.

At the time this story opens we were marching through a particularly rough part of the Orange Free State, close to the Natal border, where the mighty Drakensberg Mountains, snow-capped the year round, frowned on the scenes of rapine and slaughter that were daily being perpetrated by two supposedly civilized peoples, each praying to a common God for victory.

Up in these mountain fastnesses the Boers were numerous, and comprised the best of the fighting burghers. With half a dozen other columns we were trying to root them out and turn them back to the lower tablelands, where they could be driven in between the lines of blockhouses which were rapidly being built all over the country at Kitchener's orders. Once rounded up within these lines of small forts constructed every mile, with stout barbed wire fences connecting them, the Boers could be driven into a corral, and forced to sur-

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render, or be shot down. It would be easy.

De Lisle's column was operating along the Wilge River and fighting daily against the commando of Alex Roos, one of De Wet's ablest lieutenants and a renegade Scotsman, whose real name was Ross.

Of all the weapons with which we were fighting that Colt gun was the least effective and the most despised. The crack British artillery were always reliable, Maxim, pom-pom, or one-pounder gun, nearly always so—the Colt, never. It came to us with the reputation of a war-ender.

It was the best thing that clever American brains had ever devised; it could fire five hundred bullets a minute, and mow the enemy down like hay when the reaper is in motion. It failed dismally. A sorry Jack mule packed it around the country, took it slowly to positions where it might have been of some use if it lived up to its reputation, and took it away again to the accompaniment of curses. Then the mule fell down and rolled on it, kicked the gun-crew when they came near, and generally showed his contempt for the gun and his resentment at being laden with such a rank fraud, when he might have been like the rest of his kind, either a swift and proud member of the six team who raced the barking pom-pom into action, or a more humble, but still eminently respectable, companion of fifteen other mules in one of the commissariat wagons, with a descendant of a Zulu king to race at his side, cracking his long whip and shouting *"Yak, yah-zel!"*

The men hated the gun, the officers swore at both it and its crew, and the old sergeant, Blue, who had been an armorer all his life, and boasted that there wasn't a rifle known to man, from the French chassepot to the modern magazine, that he could not repair, and hit bullseyes with too, gave the Colt the palm for cussedness. The gun crew threatened to desert, and fat Corporal Bergin, as non-com. in charge, fell ill with chagrin, an ailment that the trooper did not know by that name. He was really broken-hearted.

AS THE group of officers squatted round the mess cart and freely vented their opinions of the gun, a figure approached within the circle of light thrown by the camp-fire on the stony ground, stood to attention, and saluted.

"Mr. Smith, sir, may I please have a few words with you?" It's about that gun, sir.

"Oh, it's you, Horsfall. Yes, what do you want?" the lieutenant asked.

"The boys say that Bergin has taken sick. and I'd like to take his place in the crew."

"All right, Horsfall, I can fix that, but why do you want to change from the troop to follow that gun? It's absolutely useless, you know, and you'll always be in trouble."

"I'll take a chance on it, Mr. Smith. I think I can find out what's wrong with the Colt, and show the regiment she ain't as black as she's painted. Can I make the transfer?"

Nat Horsfall, the young American, spoke with complete confidence in his ability to handle the troublesome gun, and the lieutenant promised to arrange the desired transfer. Horsfall had joined the regiment with Canadians, Australians, Englishmen, Anglo-Indians, and the motley gathering from the four ends of the earth, who formed the bulk of the Fighting Scouts, and he made an excellent trooper.

When we all told the story of our lives before we had come to Africa, we learned that Nat had been a machinist in a big Chicago factory, and when we saw the skilful way in which he repaired watches, binoculars, and defects in our rifles we learned to appreciate his mechanical knowledge.

When Nat first saw and heard the Colt in action—she was on her best behavior then—he was filled with admiration and patriotic pride in the inventive genius of his countrymen, and it was the bitterest gall to him to hear the jeers which the troopers loved to hurl at the gun when he was about.

He grew mad when they associated the unreliability of the Colt with his country and spoke slightingly of Americans and their inventions, giving an extra sting to their scoffing by applying all the cussedness of the gun to Nat's own personality.

When he could tolerate it no longer he begged for his transfer to the machine-gun section, and his wish was granted. In his hands the Colt became a different gun. His mechanical knowledge soon overcame all the trifling defects which the old crew could not remedy, and presently Nat had the gun spitting hot bullets, five hundred to the minute, into the Boer lines, and her reputation for deadly work going up every day. The men ceased to scoff, or if they had any

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opinions disrespectful to the gun, Nat heeded them not.

When we captured the town of Frankfort, Nat mounted his gun on a pair of light wheels, and with much energy and sweat belted a shield out of a sheet of iron, so that his crew could work the gun in comparative immunity from Mauser bullets. When the troopers first saw the Colt on its wheels drawn by a slick pair of horses, instead of being humped around on the back of a mule, they laughed and promptly called it the "milk-cart," but Nat had the laugh when the orders announced his promotion to the rank of corporal, and the Major shook hands with him before the whole regiment.

Trooper no longer, but Corporal Horsfall, in command of the machine-gun section of the Scouts, Nat bore his honors with dignity, and he sat his horse proudly as he rode past the Colonel, with the "milk-cart" rattling and jolting over the wagon-worn road that stretched like a gigantic snake across the rolling veldt. He had demonstrated in several tough skirmishes what his gun could do, and now he only wanted the grand chance to show the real worth of the Colt and forever vindicate the honor of his country. That was how he viewed the success of the gun.

THE day was hot, and the road hard. Reveille had been at three that morning, and the worn and tired troopers had been kicked into activity for a long day's march, the sergeants, who never seemed to sleep, moving up and down the lines of sleeping men, applying their boots to the prostrate forms rolled in the dew-laden blankets, in the effort to get the men to turn out and saddle-up before the sun scorched their hides.

That was the playful way of putting it when they broke in on the slumbers of worn-out men who could have slept till the crack of doom, had the War Office never developed such unfeeling brutes as sergeants of troops. Right in our faces the sun rose red over the snowy crests of the mountains, striking our tired eyes with painful shafts of garish light and revealing ridge after ridge of undulating veldt to be traversed and fought over ere we came to the actual foot of the Drakensbergs.

Early though we were in commencing our day's march, the Boers were up before us, and before day was well begun the advance guard was in action, clearing the way for the main body of the column that dragged slowly along like a cumbersome snake. By noon we were stubbornly fighting for a footing on the ridge which the Boers held in numbers, and we could hear the boom of Broadwood's guns on our right as he came into action against another commando. On our left a heliograph was merrily flashing a message. No doubt about it, Colonel Bethune's column was where we expected it, close in on our left, and he was telling us what he was doing.

"What's doing over there, Sergeant?"

The question came from one of our troopers to the sergeant who had once taken a course of army signaling.

"I can't make it out," was the reply, "there's no sense in it. Dot—dash—dash—dash. Why, there's some fool there who doesn't know what signaling is. No one could read that message."

Our speculations were cut short by a perfect tornado of firing on the left, close in. It was Mauser firing, too. There could be no mistaking the *flip-flop, flip-flop* of the Mauser rifle with which the Boers were armed. It was like the devil driving tacks on a resounding board, and we stared in blank amazement at the distant ridges, where we could see the small body of horsemen rushing for shelter and could easily picture the utter confusion into which they had been thrown by the sudden appearance of the enemy where he was least expected.

Boers on the left. How did they get there? Then where was Bethune, and who was using the helio which still blinked and winked derisively? The Colonel reined short, and asked the questions with his eyes, gazing at his staff for an answer. Even as he wondered what it all meant a trooper came galloping madly up, clearing the little streamlet at a bound and making straight to where the fluttering pennant, at the point of a lance, told him the commander rode.

Forgetting to salute, and intent only on giving the alarming news of which he was the bearer, the galloper yelled to the Colonel:

"Hundreds of Boers on the left, sir, close in! Using the helio, we thought they were Bethune's column, and they rushed us. Captain Watt sent me in to say he can't hold on—they're all round. Some of the

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men are killed, and Captain Watt must have assistance!"

The orders came sharply from the Colonel.

"All the men you've got, sir," he said to Major Shea, "and every man that can be had. Follow me. Fours left, gallop!"

As it happened that day, almost the entire regiment of Scouts was in the main body, where there was a chance to spell the horses. One troop, with the "milk-cart" attached, was operating a couple of miles away on the right. At the command we turned and raced madly for the ridge on which Captain Watt of the Sixth Mounted Infantry was tenaciously holding back the rush of the enemy. It was a question of who would get to the ridge first, we or the Boers. We made it, and just in time. When we got there men were falling and dying under a perfect hail of lead from hundreds of rifles. The enemy were pressing hard in front, and we could hear their derisive yells and shouts in broken English to Captain Watt's handful of men:

"Surrender or die, you English dogs!"

Throwing ourselves from our horses under cover of the ridge, we crawled to the crest, and, closely hugging the ant-hills and few rocks that offered shelter, we were able to check a further forward movement of the enemy and survey the situation while we waited for the artillery to take position and help us out of a tight corner. Apparently Commandant Roos had slipped in between the two columns during the night, and by the stratagem of using a captured heliograph he had approached close enough to open a deadly fire on the left flank before his identity was discovered.

With the reinforcements which we constituted, the British force was equal to the task of holding the enemy in front, but down in the *donga*, where the river ran between steep banks overgrown with thorn bush, unseen hundreds of Boers were quietly working their way around the position, and before we knew what was happening they were already well on their way to surround us or make a dash in on the convoy.

This move had to be prevented at all costs, for the convoy and the guns were practically undefended, and unless we checkmated the maneuver of the Boers there would be the same smashing-up that De Wet had given Colonel Benson's brigade, by just such another ruse, the week before.

THE Boers outnumbered us three to one, and while we dared not advance or retreat before such a fire as they were bringing to bear on the position, they had the advantage of men and cover for their encircling movement. In the nick of time the Colonel saw the maneuver of the enemy and, calling for a troop of riflemen, he led them, under cover of the hog-backed ridge, to a position covering the outlet from the *donga* through which the Boers were already beginning to defile. Pouring in a steady magazine fire, as they were in close formation, we emptied a good many saddles and drove the enemy to cover. They quickly retaliated, however, by taking up a counter position on another *kopje* and were able to command our fire.

"My God!" the Colonel cried, as he realized our desperate plight, "will those guns never come? Steady, men! Take all the shelter you can, and hang on. We'll have support presently."

The encouragement was badly needed, for we were in a position from which we would probably never be able to extricate ourselves. There could be no surrender and no retirement, for any retreat would have brought the Boers in with a rush, and would have meant not alone our own annihilation, but the capture of the regiment, stubbornly holding the position higher up the ridge. The guns, and indeed the whole convoy, must also have become trophies of the Boers' brilliant attack, for, once they had crushed in the flank, nothing could have saved the column.

Under the withering fire that was brought to bear on our position from the higher elevation of the Boers, men were being hit all round, the badly wounded clutching and tearing at the long grass in the agony of their convulsions. The troop captain lay with a bullet through his thigh, and several other officers were out of action. The fire was so deadly that not a man dared show his head and hope to retain the brains in it. Still we were there and ready to take our turn with the rifle immediately the Boers attempted to leave their position and make a dash for the convoy, which was now being formed up by its commanding officer, ready to make some defense in case the flank should be driven in.

As we squirmed and wriggled closer to our poor shelters of rock and ant-hill, I gave another anxious glance in the direction of

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the right flank from which we expected help at any moment.

What was that moving across the veldt in a cloud of dust, just like those spiral columns one sees on a Western prairie when the gathering tornado whips the dust and dried grass into a pillar and sends it flying through the herds of frightened cattle?

As I looked, the thing took shape and out of the dust came the "milk-cart," with Corporal Nat in the lead, racing as hard as his horses could travel to our succor! I shrieked the glad news to the troop, who went frantic with joy and hurrahed in a way to make the Boers sit up and take notice. It was worth living some time in the face of death to see that sight. Nat's hat flying on its strap, half a yard behind his head, and his long hair streaming out on the wind, the gun leaping and bounding over the uneven ground as the drivers urged on their team, and the enemy's bullets spitting up little puffs of dust as they hit the ground all about the fast-traveling gun.

The rattle of the old "milk-cart" was sweet music to our ears, and above it all we could hear the Wild-West whoops of Nat as he piloted his beloved Colt into action. Clean through a wire fence the gun forced its passage, the broken wires springing into the air and circling like whip-thongs; tore through the rippling *spruit*, mounted the slope—up, up; wheeled to position under a little knoll, three hundred yards to our left; broke apart from its team, and, in a minute after we first sighted it, was spitting hell and death into the Boer lines!

There was no trouble this time. Nat's chance to make good had come, and nobly he and his gun responded, the Colt hammering away without a hitch, in reply to the devilish *tack-tacking* of the Mauser rifles. A belt of cartridges reeled off while Nat's steady finger held the trigger and his cool brain and clear eye directed the flow of bullets. Another and another belt ran through, and the Boer fire slackened under the leaden hail. They scurried over the rocks to a more elevated position, and as they did so Nat's orders came sharp and clear.

"Rear limber up!"

The gun again advanced in the teeth of the enemy. The leading horse went down. In a moment the traces were cut, and the Colt traveled as fast as its one horse could pull it, right to the position the Boers had precipitately abandoned. The change of position was brilliantly executed amid a storm of fire, and, once the gun was unlimbered and the crew safe behind the shield, the rout of the enemy was no longer in doubt. They broke and fled; and as they did so the Colonel gave the order for a general advance, while the field artillery, which had followed on Nat's heels, came into action and shelled the flying Boers.

WE HAD been saved by Corporal Nat and his once despised "milk-cart," and as we rode back from our long pursuit the praises of Nat were on the lips of every one, from the gray-headed old Colonel down to the rosy-faced little English trumpeter who proudly rode with the men recounting the story of the day's danger and its glorious ending.

As we approached once more the position which we had held at great cost and had maintained only by Nat's timely assistance, the ambulance carts were busily collecting the wounded and the dead. There was the "milk-cart," slowly returning to camp, but our searching eyes failed to locate the hero of its brilliant work.

"Tell Corporal Horsfall I want to see him," said the Colonel to one of the troopers. "Tell him to come straight to me."

"That's impossible, sir," replied one of the surgeons, looking up from dressing the wound of a groaning trooper; "Horsfall is badly wounded. I've just sent him in," pointing as he spoke to the white tilted cart with the red cross, slowly moving campward beside the Colt gun.

We got the rest of the story from the gun-crew. When the Boers finally broke, brave Nat could not join in the pursuit. His remaining gun-horse was wounded, but nevertheless the gun could shoot, and in the exultation of the moment Nat jumped from behind the bullet-battered shield to give his old familiar whoop of triumph. The Boers heard, and with a parting volley at the gun, which had robbed them of victory, they billeted a bullet in the brave Yankee lad, who fell mortally wounded across the limber of the gun he had served so well. He died that night, after a hand-grasp with the sad old Colonel, while beside the hospital tent the troopers anxiously waited for one word of hope from the surgeon.

An alien to Britain, Corporal Horsfall gave that country his brave young life for

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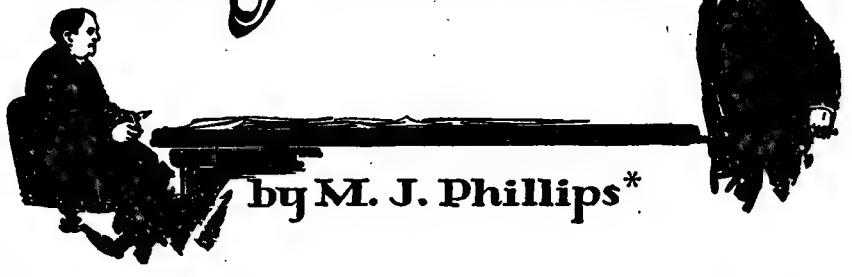
the honor of his own land and his people, and now that the war is almost forgotten and Briton and Boer live peacefully together on the soil where they fought so desperately, Nat sleeps soundly in the shade of a little farmhouse where the Wilge River flows.

We buried him tenderly, and, so that the ravenous aesvogels and the prowling jackals should not disturb his bones, we piled a mound of stones on his grave and surmounted it with a rough cross fashioned from a stone on which he who seeks may read:

Sacred
To the Memory
of
Corporal N. Horsfall
Killed in action

Getting Doctor Cameron



by M. J. Phillips*

"WHAT did you start this campaign for?" asked Dr. Cameron. "Is the *Press* after me?"

The editor of the *Press* leaned back in his swivel-chair and half-closed his shrewd eyes. He took a long survey of Cameron before speaking.

"The *Press*," he said slowly, "is after no one; it is merely doing as it always has done—protecting the interests of the common people. We believe that cruelties have been practised at Annistown Asylum—cruelties which you as superintendent, if you had no hand in them, should have prevented. We are determined they must cease. The *Press* is not disturbed because you may be hurt by its campaign."

"Oh, punk!" replied Dr. Cameron energetically. "Come across, Mr. Winn. Are you after me?"

"I have just explained our position," returned Winn.

He spoke stiffly, but the ghost of a malicious smile was visible under his close-clipped mustache.

"You can't fool me, you know," observed Cameron, leaning forward. His round, boyish face, with its dimpled chin and rosy cheeks, was thrust toward the editor, and a stubby forefinger, rising and falling in the air, drove home his remarks. "As an intelligent man, you know I haven't been brutal to the patients, and that I haven't permitted brutality on the part of attendants, when I could help myself. I'm not the type to be wantonly cruel. You are pretty well satisfied, Mr. Winn, that there's nothing irregular up there. But I was a newspaper man myself for four years, and I'm perfectly aware that you could blacken the reputation of an angel if you set out to do it. So I want to know if you are merely making good on your first story, or——"

"Do you deny that patients are beaten at Annistown?" asked the editor suddenly.

"Certainly not," returned the doctor readily. "Sometimes a new attendant lets his temper get the best of him. He will strike back when a patient attacks him, but he always loses his job for doing it."

"If you had better discipline, Doctor, that wouldn't occur," declared the editor.

"Cut it, Mr. Winn, cut it!" retorted the other wearily. "As man to man, now, are you after me?"

The editor's eyes snapped wide open, and he nodded.

"As man to man, Doctor, we are, and we're going to get you! I'd advise you to

*See page 411.

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quit right now while the quitting is good."

The superintendent grinned.

"I thought so. The owner of your sheet wants my job for his brother-in-law, Dr. Carscaden. Well, I'm not going to quit!

"Of course the *Times* will be with me. Better tell Carscaden to look out for his reputation. I can furnish the goods to peel it off him in inch strips. I'm something of a 'getter' myself!"

II

DR. CAMERON hurried out zestfully into the chill Winter air. He was a natural fighter, and the prospect of a battle, even though it might result in his losing his position, was not unwelcome.

The *Press* had started its campaign to oust him with an interview in which a former patient at the State asylum claimed he had been ill-treated.

In the days that followed, the *Press* hammered away at Dr. Cameron, using the material furnished by dissatisfied inmates and their friends.

The *Times* was just as busy in Cameron's defense. It announced the *Press* warfare to be a campaign for the replacing of the superintendent by Dr. Carscaden, and inevitably explained the relationship between the latter and the owner of the *Press*. It explained the stories of cruelty as fast as they were printed, in turn disregarding the truth somewhat in order to idealize Dr. Cameron as a persecuted hero.

Scarcely a week had elapsed when Dr. Cameron became convinced that the enemy had a spy within the asylum walls. Articles on management, details of routine, close-range studies of the inmates—a dozen things that could not come from without—appeared regularly in the *Press*. Written by a skilled newspaper man who concealed his bias under an impartial guise, they hurt, and hurt deeply.

One dull, cold afternoon when the work and exercise of the patients had ended for the day, Dr. Cameron sent for his assistant.

"Wells," he said abruptly, "the *Press* has a man inside here. And he's lying like a horse-thief."

Dr. Wells gave vent to his surprise, though he shook his head doubtfully.

"They send a man up from the city every day, you know."

"All a bluff," returned his superior. "This fellow writes of things that happen outside visiting hours. And he isn't playing fair. He's taken to abusing my family!" The superintendent's eyes flashed angrily. "If I could lay hands on him once!"

"How could he get in here?" queried Dr. Wells.

"Crooked papers. There's a judge or two in the city under obligations to the *Press*, who could be depended on to fix that. How many have been admitted this week?"

"This week has been a record-breaker; eighteen."

"Hum. It would take too long to take each one of them in hand separately; I want to catch this fellow to-night. But I have a scheme I think will work out. He has probably bribed an attendant on his hall to get his 'copy' to the telegraph-office every evening. If we interfered with that scheme, he'd howl, I believe." He frowned intently for a minute, then rapped his desk with his knuckles:

"I have it. Right after supper, call every attendant in and switch them. Send the fourth-floor men to the second, the first-floor to the third, and *vice versa*. Get them just as far from their regular stations as possible. Warn them they are not to leave their posts to-night, for any purpose whatever, without written permission from me."

Dr. Wells was smiling appreciatively.

"Good plan, Doctor. You think the *Press* man will betray himself?"

"I know he will. He'll move heaven and earth to get his story away. Arrange to be sent for as soon as any patient begins acting peculiarly. When you spot this chap, let me know. I'll attend to his case!"

The superintendent's lips compressed themselves; he closed his right hand vengefully.

It was after eight o'clock when young Doctor Wells popped into the superintendent's office, eyes alight.

"Man in Ward Three is howling for Attendant Stubbs," he announced gleefully.

"I'll go with you," announced Dr. Cameron.

WARD THREE, like all the other wards of the asylum, consisted of a long hall perhaps twenty feet wide, flanked on each side by a row of tiny, cell-like rooms. The doors were of sheet iron, with an eighteen-inch grating let in. To

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secure better circulation each door was on a chain which permitted it to swing six inches without being unfastened.

Two attendants were assigned to each ward and their normal stations were at either end, excepting when making inspections of the rooms. Now, however, they stood before a door near the center of the hall. The door was clashing against its chain under the propulsion of a powerful pair of arms. An angry bull-voice was echoing through the ward.

Most of the patients paid no attention to the noise from Room Thirty-Four. They slept or sat idly on their cots, or busied themselves with the childish occupations of a sick brain.

There was one exception—the patient in Thirty-three. He was a mild little man of fifty with a dome of a forehead, gold-bowed spectacles, overhanging eyebrows and a huge nose. Perpetual motion had evidently landed him in the State asylum. He had brought his machine with him—a springy track shaped like a flattened circle, and a steel ball which was forever rolling slowly around it—that is, rolling when properly encouraged by the inventor's finger.

Now perpetual motion had been abandoned for perpetual noise. The little man's cell was directly across from the disturbance. Standing on his stool, he stared blandly out through the grating. There were enjoyment and anticipation in the faded blue eyes.

"Here, what's the matter with you?" demanded Dr. Cameron of the man in Thirty-four. When he looked up, the superintendent was bothered by a vague and half-forgotten memory. The same fruitless effort to identify the man had come to annoy him when he had first seen the patient, a few days before.

Thirty-four ceased his assault on the door. He was a big fellow, with massive shoulders and a mop of thick hair. His dish-shaped face was contorted by a scowl.

"You're the superintendent!" It was an accusation and not a question. "It's about time you got here! These fatheads won't let me see Attendant Stubbs."

"Stubbs is busy," returned the superintendent briefly, as he studied his man.

"Well, I've got to see him; I want to send a message by him."

"Patients send messages out of here through the superintendent. If you don't shut up, I'll put you in the padded cell."

The patient, a ham-like hand clasping the grating each side of his face, considered the situation.

"Might as well own up," he said finally, with a conciliatory grin. "My name's Willover, and I'm a reporter on the *Press*. The old man sent me up here to get something on you. I suppose it's all off now. Just open the door and I'll go down-town and stay to-night. Got to get my stuff away, you know."

Dr. Cameron signed to an attendant to unlock the cell. The patient's confession explained the familiarity of his appearance. He was Willover, the football player whose pictured features looked from every sporting page a few years before. After completing his college course he had drifted into newspaperdom.

Editor Winn had evidently thought that his spy would be discovered; he had sent a "husky" who, graduated from the rough-and-tumble of the football field, would give a good account of himself.

"Doctor, what is the patient's name?" asked the superintendent, gravely professional in manner, though his eyes glittered.

"William Henry Smith," answered Dr. Wells with equal gravity; "sent from the city on the twentieth. Mild dementia."

"It has become a serious case," announced Dr. Cameron. "The patient's hallucination just now is that he is the reporter of the *Press*. The reporter of the *Press* happens to be a cur and a cad.

"He has not only attacked me in my public and official capacity, but in my personal capacity as well. He has also written abusively of my parents and my wife. Mr. Smith must be taught that his mania is highly dangerous."

"Aw, say, Doc," remonstrated Willover uneasily, "I'm telling the truth. I'm sane as you are."

"You'll be mad in a minute!" promised Cameron.

With the words he slapped the burly newspaper man ringingly across the face.

III

AN OATH, born of pain and surprise, burst from Willover's lips.

"Going to get even, eh?" he growled. "Got a gang to beat me up? Well, I'll hustle you, at that! Come on, you cowards!"

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The superintendent replied, as he made unhurried preparation:

"Don't need any gang. I'm going to lick you myself!"

The battle that followed was fought to its logical conclusion. At first glance it seemed almost absurd, for the newspaper man loomed head and shoulders over the superintendent.

But the odds were all in favor of Dr. Cameron. Though a shade below medium height, he was not frail; his body was well-developed and hard. Always moderately an athlete, he had kept in trim by long walks over the asylum farms, an occasional day of manual labor when there was a rush to sow or gather crops, and semi-weekly glove set-tos with Dr. Wells, who would rather box than eat.

Willover had gone from one extreme—abstemious living and rigid training in college—to the other. He had become fat from sheer physical laziness, and short-winded from many cigarettes. He was strong enough, but his strength was the slow, resistless power of the traction-engine; while Cameron was quick with the flashing, wicked strength of the racing-car.

Only four watched the fight—the assistant superintendent, the two attendants, and the mild-eyed inventor. Other patients came listlessly to their gratings, looked uncuriously at the panting, striving men, and retired to their cots again. But the perpetual motion expert, beating softly on the bars with slim hands, chirped and crowed bloodthirstily, and encouraged Dr. Cameron.

In five minutes, though Willover had twice knocked the superintendent down, it was plain that he was doomed to take a whipping. His wind was gone; and his heavy-footed rushes could not match the other's agility. Dodging and ducking, Dr. Cameron hammered away at the scowling dish-face. His fists thudded upon it until it was puffed and cut and raw.

"Got enough?" gritted the superintendent.

And Willover, dazed, swaying, clutching with one trembling hand at a cell-door for support, gasped:

"Suppose so; I can't see."

"Now," said Cameron incisively, "your paper's been dirty mean to me, and I'm going to turn the laugh on it. You're to be lost.

"I'll give you your choice: a solitary cell till they've exhausted every legal method to release you, and that means two or three weeks; or, your promise not to attempt to escape or communicate with anybody outside for four days—until the Governor gets back from his eastern trip. I want my case to go before him without any more prejudice. During these four days——" and he rapidly outlined what Willover was to do.

The reporter smiled a lumpy smile.

"No 'solitary' for mine," he replied, still breathing heavily from his exertions. "I'll give my parole."

"All right," nodded the doctor. "By the way, Dr. Wells, take—Smith—over to the hospital and fix him up a little."

"On our way," remarked the reporter facetiously. And then he added, hesitatingly: "Would you mind shaking hands, Doc? I'm sorry for the stuff I had to write, but—you understand."

When a hearty grip had been exchanged Willover was led away.

A sprightly voice broke in on Dr. Cameron's musings:

"Say, Super, how much do you weigh?"

The doctor turned to meet the bland gaze of the perpetual motion man.

"Hundred and sixty," he replied.

It was his custom to humor patients in all things reasonable. The question seemed reasonable, but queer.

"You're about five-feet-six?"

"Yes."

"Gee, that's a peach of a story!" cried the little man appreciatively. "Dave and Goli' all over again. He's seven inches taller than you, and fifty pounds heavier, and you maced him to a grinning pulp! They've got cuts of that 'white hope' frame of his in the office; I'll wire in to have 'em fake some of you."

"Say, who the devil are you, anyway?" demanded the doctor, in irascible astonishment.

"Henry T. Price, editorial writer on the *Times!*" replied the little man cheerfully. "We're shorthanded, and the old man sent me up to cover this story from the inside."

"Another ringer!" ejaculated the superintendent. "Are there any insane people at all in this ward?"

"Only Reginald and Harold there!" chirruped Price, pointing through the grating at the stalwart attendants, who were sniggering behind their hands.

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IV

THE morning after the fight, having failed to get a new tale from Willover, the *Press* appeared with a rehash of its old charges against Superintendent Cameron. But the *Times's* four-column spread told the story of the encounter in detail and with a cleverness and gusto that proved Henry T. Price to have been a newspaper man before he was tied to an editorial chair.

The article was illustrated with cuts of the principals; a view of Annistown Asylum; a picture of Willover in football togs and another of him stripped to the waist to show his bulging muscles; several spirited sketches illustrative of the fray, in which the difference in size between the two men was much exaggerated; and a masterpiece of a final tableau, in which Willover was stretched unconscious on the floor, while his complacent conqueror was being acclaimed by a score of capering idiots.

Editor Winn made one of the few mistakes of his career. The *Press* boldly charged that Willover had been set upon and beaten by a crowd of murderous attendants, directed by the arch-thug of the place, Cameron. But Henry T. Price's story had been so luminous, so straightforward and unforced that it carried its own conviction.

The charges of the *Press* were greeted with hoots of mirthful derision all over the State. "Take your medicine!" was one correspondent's way of expressing the general feeling, in a letter to the *Press* which the *Times* cheerfully published. "You sent a bruiser up there to start something, and he wasn't a good finisher. Be a sport!"

All efforts of the *Press* to locate the battered reporter, to get word to him or from him, were unavailing. Dr. Cameron was threatened with habeas corpus proceedings if he did not divulge Willover's whereabouts at once; but it went no further than that. The *Press* feared another outburst of ridicule, for Henry T. Price was publishing daily bulletins about the football star in the *Times:*

"Willover's face is in bad shape, and he was somewhat stiff on arising this morning. Several times he remarked, 'Cracky, what a halfback that man Cameron would have made!'"

"Willover lost eighty-seven cents playing penny-ante last evening. He was in good spirits, saying, 'That's expense-money, any way.'"

"The official pugilist of the *Press* staff declared to-day that Dr. Cameron had done just right in beating him up. 'I was sent up here to throw it on to him,' he said; 'and I obeyed instructions. He trimmed me fair and square, and I guess I had it coming.'"

"Willover thinks Annistown Asylum patients are well fed, though the *Press* has been kicking on the food. 'You have good grub up here,' he said this morning; 'regular training-table. I'd like to stay a month.'"

The paper in which the last bulletin appeared chronicled the return of the Governor, and the fact that Dr. Cameron had been called to the capital for a conference.

It was with a heavy heart that the superintendent responded to the curt telegram from the executive office. The Governor was a gray, quiet man, suspected of churchly leanings. While he might disregard the trumped-up charges of cruelty which the *Press* was urging on his notice, there was scarcely a hope that he would overlook the fight with Willover.

Dr. Cameron regarded his dismissal as certain.

"If only I hadn't punched Willover!" he reflected ruefully. "If I'd just locked him up and forgotten all about him for a few days. The old man would have stood for that, all right. But to hammer him like a barroom bouncer! Well, it's too late now for regrets."

He alighted from the train in a heavy snowstorm, and was driven to the Capitol. A colored doorman ushered him at once into the Governor's private office.

On the broad, flat desk of the chief executive were two piles of newspapers—the accusatory *Press* and the commendatory *Times*. The articles in relation to the asylum had been heavily marked with a blue pencil.

GOVERNOR YOUNG scrutinized the superintendent as they shook hands. Nothing escaped him, from the skinned knuckles to the black eye, the scarred nose, and the bumps on the doctor's forehead. The doctor, flushing hotly, hung his head a bit as had been his wont years ago when his mother said: "Willie Cameron, you've been fighting again!"

"Been reading some extraordinary things

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about Annistown Asylum and yourself, Dr. Cameron. What's the trouble?" began the Governor. "One of our State institutions seems to be getting undesirable publicity."

"The *Press* began a campaign against me because Dr. Carscaden wants my place," replied Cameron bluntly.

"Ah, yes," observed the Governor, with cold politeness. "Suppose you sit down and tell me about it, Doctor—all about it from the first."

The superintendent removed his overcoat and thrust it into the waiting hands of the doorman. He drew a comfortable chair to the Governor's desk. A sudden impulse determined him to "give it to the old man straight," and he yielded to it.

His story rushed to his lips and he gave it utterance—the facts, just as they were, without excuse or palliation.

"And then," he went on, in the thick of it, "I licked Willover!"

The Governor stopped him. "Tell me about the—ah—the encounter, please," he commanded.

And Cameron did. He was too engrossed in the narrative to note that its thrill brought the Governor forward almost on tiptoe and that he gripped the arms of his chair very tightly.

"Where is Willover now?" asked Governor Young, when he had finished.

"Cutting ice over on Lost Lake; he's four miles from a public road, on the back end of our farm. He lives at a cottage by the lake with a dozen other 'trusties' and a couple of attendants. The asylum and grounds have been overrun with *Press* spies the last few days, but they haven't been able to find him."

The Governor, sinking back in his comfortable chair, half-turned away to gaze out the big window where the snow was having its will in the deserted park. He bent an ivory paper-cutter between his fingers. Cameron knew his fate was being decided, and he braced himself to meet it stoically.

It seemed a long time before the Governor turned. When he did swing round, his face was as impassive and judicial as ever.

"Release Mr. Willover as soon as you go back."

"Yes, sir."

"Discharge all attendants who have struck patients."

"I have, sir."

"If you have any influence with the *Times*, ask them to forget Annistown for a while. I'll see what I can do with the *Press*."

Certainty descended upon Cameron like a pall. The Governor was to ask a favor of the *Press!* That could mean but one thing: Dr. Carscaden was to succeed him. The only question was, how soon?

"When do I let go, Governor?" He strove to ask the question lightly, and succeeded.

The real man behind the impassive politician face peeped out at that. The cold gray eyes warmed. When the Governor spoke, it was with the homely speech of his early days on the farm. He always harked back when he was much in earnest.

"You ain't goin' to let go, by hickory!" he cried fiercely. "Did you think I was going to let a yellow newspaper drive you out because you was man enough to fight back? Not much! You'll stay at Annistown as long as I'm Governor."

"Why, Mr. Young!" The superintendent could say no more. There was a lump in his throat, and his eyes smarted unaccountably.

"That's all right, Doc," nodded the Governor, patting him on the shoulder; "that's all right." He gripped the other's extended hand. "Carscaden's a fish, and a dead fish, too. And I don't owe the *Press* anything. They're pokin' fun at me half the time—and then think I'll do their bidding!"

He glanced cautiously toward the anteroom. An immaculate private secretary, a pale young man with neatly parted hair and rimless eyeglasses, sat at the primmest of desks, near the door. A severe stenographer, white-waisted and competent, was busily engaged in the opposite corner. The doorman, respectably smug and pompous, marched in, engrossed with some trifling errand.

The Governor looked beyond them, with reminiscent eyes—eyes that pierced the years which had drawn like a curtain across his dim boyhood. An eager little smile played about his mouth.

"Gosh, Doc," he whispered, "I'd 'a' given ten dollars to see that fight!"

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Big Game

An Episode in the Career of a Gentleman of Fortune

BY MAX RITTENBERG*

"WE HAD been married a full seven days before I found courage to tell my wife what was my profession in life. A touch of weakness, but then every man has his times of weakness. I remember to this day the tremor with which I took her in my arms and said:

"'You have never asked me my profession.'

"'I thought you had no profession,' she replied.

"Looking her straight in the eye, for how she would take my statement meant much, very much to me, I said:

"'I am a thief.'"

The speaker paused to sip gently at his Turkish coffee. He lay full length on an invalid couch on the veranda of his bungalow, where the tropical sun blazed through the thick vines and creepers and played checker-board, yellow and purple, on the sandal-wood flooring.

He was a man of forty-five or so, hollowed by illness, but showing still the power and daring and debonair sureness of himself that had carried him through his amazing career. On that solitary island in the Indian Ocean he was the only white man, excepting his lifelong servant Laroche, and of course myself. Laroche, a tall, dignified, well-spoken fellow, had been with him through all his exploits, and was still his faithful friend and devoted nurse.

I, a journalist, was the merest stranger, and matter nothing in the story. Coming back in a coasting schooner from Zanzibar, there had been a monsoon hurricane and a fire, a fortnight in an open boat with precious little water, and then the providential landfall on Hallard's Island.

Here I found that extraordinary man, John Hallard, and the finest copy I had ever hit upon.

My host was continuing: "No doubt you wonder why I tell you all this. The answer is simple. When I use the word 'thief' in speaking of myself, I use a very crude and clumsy word—a coarse policeman's word. To put the matter more accurately, I have gained my livelihood by exerting my wits in ways upon which society does not set its seal of approval. 'Crime,' so called, is a mere matter of arbitrary, man-made morality. The successful city financier, keeping to legal stealing, is honored and courted among men. He works within the law and runs no risks from the

*See page 411.

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law. I, on the contrary, have worked outside the law and risked my liberty on every *coup*. It has been a sporting game.

"But the greatest drawback of my profession is that one's masterwork has to be kept secret. You carry out a *coup* that deserves immortality, and you must perforce hide it. When I think of the glorious risks I have run, the splendid schemes I have engineered, the crazy chances I have brought off successfully— Now *you* can give me the one thing I have most wanted. You can put my exploits into print. Keep the identity of this island hidden—otherwise use names and places at your own discretion."

"But your wife——" I ventured.

"My wife is dead."

For some moments John Hallard remained reverently quiet, and his silence was one to be respected. No words were needed to tell what a great gap in his life had been left by the woman no longer with him. Finally he continued, with a return to his usual light surface manner:

"'I am a thief.' A strange statement to make to a bride, was it not? There was I, moving in what one might call 'motor-car circles,' apparently a man of easy circumstances, an idler, a *flâneur*—the kind of man who divides up his life between sleep and pleasure-chasing. The woman I chose to share my life was the employee of a Rue de la Paix jewelry establishment—and a woman in a million. Instinct led me straight. Renie was half English, with all the cleverness and the inborn artistry of the Frenchwoman and all the solid sense of the Englishwoman."

"What did she reply to your confession?"

"My wife searched into my eyes for a long time, reading my inmost thoughts, before she replied: '*Chêri*, I had suspected it before we married. But I don't care! I will follow you to the world's end! Tell me, you have had some debt against society to wipe out—what is it?'

"Yes, she was right; I had my debt against society to work off. My father, you must know, was the Earl of ——. If the law had recognized his marriage with my mother as valid, I should now be the holder of that title and place. As it is, my place has been what I have carved out for myself. But in all my career, remember this—I have played the game for the love of the game. Ah, the zest of it! You *can't* realize. You must experience. My work was the finest sport in the world, because on every *coup* I was staking my liberty."

II

THE case of the knowing banker—that is the exploit of John Hallard's which I would first tell to the world. Highly immoral, and yet my sympathies ran irresistibly to the man who planned and risked. But let the reader judge——

Monsieur Octave Bourdion was the banker's name, and Hallard came across him at Monte. Several times in the Salles de Jeux Hallard had noted him standing away from the crowd in a Napoleonesque attitude—legs apart, arms folded tightly, chin sunk deep on his chest—with a smile of infinite wisdom playing around his beady eyes. A stocky, paunchy figure of a man, with that solidity of pose which goes with a comfortable foundation of shares, bonds, mortgages and the rest of the financier outfit.

Monsieur Octave Bourdion had good reason for his knowing smile. He was a heavy shareholder in the Casino, and held substantial interests in the Sporting Club of Nice and other money-coining ventures along the Côte d'Azur. Himself, he never gambled on the tables. That was a game for the pigeons!

That knowing smile roused Hallard's sporting instincts to the full. Here was a man worth pitting oneself against in a contest of wits.

"Renie," he whispered to his wife, "tonight we will play pigeon. We will run a martingale system on one of the *transversales*, like any raw plunger with more money than sense."

Renie smiled, understanding, and glanced around the Salle Schmidt to see what game was to be stirred from the coverts.

"That Napoleon of finance standing over there by the pillar," whispered her husband.

"A man like that! Oh, *chêri*, you mustn't run such risks! He looks as if he knew every move on the board."

"The men who do know don't show it," retorted Hallard, more to reassure her than because he believed in the aphorism.

So they selected a table well under the eye of Monsieur Octave Bourdion, and began to "play pigeon." For the evening that was their sole task, to plant a tiny impression in the mind of the knowing banker

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looking on with satirical satisfaction at the carnival of greed and stupidity that helped to put money in his own pockets.

TWO days later, in the early afternoon, John Hallard rushed hatless out of the Casino and up to the banking establishment of Octave Bourdion et Cie. Perhaps you may know it—an imposing building on the farther side of the velvety lawns that sweep down to the main entrance of the Casino.

"I must see Monsieur Bourdion at once; the matter is vital!" said Hallard feverishly to a clerk.

The hatlessness and air of urgency impressed the clerk, and without delay Hallard was shown into the private sanctum of the financier. He had excellent taste in office apartments—this Monsieur Bourdion. It was more like a château study than a banker's office. Fine pictures on the walls, over light-oak paneling; comfortable padded chairs drawn up cosily around small occasional tables; chandeliers *nouveau art;* embroidered curtains by the windows in royal blue and silver; a bronze statuette of Napoleon on the mantelpiece.

"Monsieur Bourdion," said Hallard without ceremony, hardly allowing time to shake hands, "I want two thousand louis at once! Now, on the spot!"

The banker smiled at that boyish impatience.

"Please be seated, monsieur, and permit me a few necessary questions. Your name, and the security you propose to offer for this loan?"

"I've no security. I'm nearly cleared out. My wife and I are playing a martingale on the *transversale* seven, eight, nine, and the —— numbers have never turned up all day! Of course they must come out some time. I've left my wife in charge of our system, and rushed up here to get two thousand louis from you. My name's Sir Ralph Kenrick"—that being the name and position Hallard had worked up for himself at this particular period of his career—"and of course in London or Paris I could lay my hand on twenty thousand louis at a moment's notice."

Bourdion looked him over slowly and shrewdly, and remarked:

"Monsieur will permit me to say that his request is scarcely one that a prudent banker would comply with without investigation. You make certain statements to me as to your position and means, but——"

At this, Hallard exploded with impatience. He ransacked his pockets and threw on the table a couple of blank checks, his cigarette-case engraved with his name, an entry ticket to the baccarat-rooms at the Villa des Fleurs at Aix, a couple of old envelopes and a dunning letter from a London tailor—the most ridiculous proof of identity that a would-be borrower ever offered.

Bourdion smiled his knowing smile, and waved them aside.

"I have seen you playing at the tables, monsieur, but I regret that I could not advance you——"

Hallard had a sudden inspiration, and snatched up a telephone without ceremony.

"Get me on the trunk wire to Paris!" he called to the operator. "I want Paris two hundred and eight, seventy-seven, the banking house of Edwardes, Coldred & Co.!"

Then he turned triumphantly to the financier.

"That's my Paris bank. Speak to them yourself as soon as the connection is made. Ask them if I'm good for two thousand, three thousand, five thousand louis. Ask them if they will identify me on the 'phone. Ask them anything you like! Come, Monsieur Bourdion, you're a man of the world. Is it likely that I should come to borrow two thousand louis from you without security unless I were really Sir Ralph Kenrick? The thing would be ridiculous, childish!"

The smile died out of the banker's face. He waited impassively for the connection to be made. His mind was chewing over the question: "Is this fellow a clumsy swindler, or merely a rich young fool?"

Some fifteen minutes later, his inquiries fully satisfied, he had handed two thousand louis in notes to John Hallard.

"I wish you the best of luck at the tables!" he said, as he bowed him out, and the knowing smile was now replaced by one of apparently great friendliness.

Hallard read it as meaning: "A rich young fool—more grist for my Casino mill!"

The two thousand louis were of course wired at once from the Paris bank to the firm of Octave Bourdion & Co. When Hallard sat down to play the big game with a shrewd financier, he did not lay "Bank of Engraving" notes on the table. No, he played the game with real money.

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The next evening there came a very cordial invitation to Bourdion to dine with Hallard and his wife at the Café de Paris, and do the Russian ballet after. Renie put out all her charms; flattered him with superb artistry; left him at the end of the evening ten years younger. Where women were concerned, the financier plainly considered himself a second Napoleon.

"A rich young fool with an altogether delightful wife. I must see more of them, especially the latter."

That was the summary in the mind of Monsieur Octave Bourdion which Hallard sensed. He read it from the way the banker helped Renie with her opera cloak in the Atrium of the Casino when he was apparently turning away to glance at the notorious Comtessa del'R——.

During the next few days Bourdion contrived to see a great deal of them. While Hallard was busy racing his *Flying Fish* at the motor-boat meet, the banker very kindly looked after Renie, who professed herself bored by motor-boat races. He showed her over the wonderful oceanographic museum erected by the Prince of Monaco; he took her motoring among the Alpes Maritimes; he showed her the magnificent vaults of his bank, of which he was very proud.

The bank clerks seemed much interested in their chief's fair visitor.

"And now?" asked Renie of her husband, in the privacy of their own rooms.

"And now we leave Monte. We have planted the seeds of confidence in the mind of Monsieur Octave Bourdion, and we allow them time to germinate. After six months or so we return to renew our acquaintance with the Napoleon of finance, if you are willing."

Renie held out her arms to her husband, and there was beautiful tenderness in her voice as she said,

"*Chéri*, of course I am willing. Whither thou goest, I go also!"

III

JOHN HALLARD confided to me a professional axiom: "For a big *coup*, select a would-be knave rather than an honest man. Oh, yes, there *are* honest men to be found—I have met many of them in my kaleidoscopic study of life. I am not one of your case-hardened cynics."

In this case of the knowing banker, both sides had been keenly studying one another. Bourdion was without doubt a sporting match for any man of Hallard's profession. He had wide experience of men and events; a keen decisive mind; determination and physical courage. On Hallard's side was the point that he had summed up the banker as a would-be knave, but the difficulties of the big game made him tingle.

In the eight months that elapsed before the next visit to Monte, there was ample time for preparation. In between, Hallard managed to execute a sound piece of professional work on a summer cruise around the Mediterranean with the steam-yacht *Ariadne* and her cargo of pleasure-seekers. But that is quite unconnected with the Bourdion case.

It was early Autumn when "Sir Ralph Kenrick" put up once more at the Hotel des Palmiers at Monte—this time *en garçon*, without his wife or Laroche. As he explained to Bourdion, there are times when one prefers to be without one's wife.

"Precisely, my dear Kenrick, precisely!"

"Lady Kenrick will join me later on; she is visiting relations in the Ardèche. She asked to be remembered to you."

The banker bowed to hide a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes.

"A thousand thanks! Please be so good as to convey to her my very respectful salutations."

Hallard nodded carelessly, and then took his arm in confidential fashion.

"There's an important matter which is worrying me considerably just now. I wonder if you would give me the benefit of your advice?"

He looked around at the strollers on the terrace promenade, and hesitated.

The financier suggested his private office, and when they were comfortably settled in his luxurious armchairs Hallard took out from an inner secret pocket a time-faded document and handed it to his host.

The latter looked at it keenly, with the searching eye of a banker, read it through, and asked:

"What does it mean—this list? Jewels, plate, jewels. Is it your idea to dispose of some heirlooms?"

"They're not mine—I only wish they were."

"Whose?"

"That's the puzzle. At one time they be-

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longed to Napoleon. Now, I suppose, they more or less belong to the Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac, or perhaps to the French Government. Have you a treasure-trove law over here like we have in England?"

Monsieur Bourdion's mouth tightened and his features composed themselves to inscrutability.

"Be so good as to explain," he said.

It was a long explanation, told confusedly and without the lucid skill of the man of affairs. In brief it amounted to this. Hallard had unearthed the document at his country home in England, which was formerly in possession of a family of French exiles. The paper was a list of treasures cached by Napoleon's orders on the barren Ile St. Jérômé off the Golfe Juan where Napoleon landed on the return from Elba. At that time it was doubtful whether the French nation would rally round him, and the cached treasure was probably some form of prudent reserve fund. Why it had remained in its hiding-place Hallard could not profess to explain. But there it was.

"I RAN over to the Ile St. Jérômé in my *Flying Fish* a few nights ago, and found it in the place described in another of these old papers. Now the island belongs, I'm told, to an old Gascon fellow—Cyprien, fifth Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac—who seems to live a hermit life somewhere in the Pyrenees. I don't suppose he has a ghost of a notion that a treasure worth five hundred thousand dollars at least, according to this list, is buried on his land. What ought I to do?"

The banker questioned and cross-questioned at great length, with a hard glitter in his beady eyes.

Hallard repeated his difficulty: "If I were to manage to buy the island from him, would all this treasure be legally mine? And even then, would it be playing the game? On the other hand, my knowledge ought to entitle me to some share in the treasure."

Then Hallard made a confession. He had contrived to break open one of the chests, and had brought away some of the hidden store. And with that he drew out from the inner pocket a bracelet and a necklace of pearls that to the expert eye clearly belonged to the Louis Quatorze period. He ticked them off on the list.

Bourdion's gimlet eyes screwed into his visitor while the latter was handling the document. Finally he said: "Your question is too difficult a one to answer offhand. Suppose you were to take me in your motor-boat to the Ile St. Jérômé, and let me see for myself how things lie?"

"If you wish it."

The banker fingered the bracelet and necklace casually. "You ought not to carry these about with you in a place like Monte Carlo. Would you care for me to put them in safe deposit meanwhile?"

Hallard made no demur, and the banker drew out from his desk the customary safe-deposit receipt-book and had his visitor sign it in the usual way as *owner* and depositing party. That signature could, if he desired it, send Hallard to prison.

It was characteristic prudence on the part of Monsieur Octave Bourdion.

A LITTLE after midnight, guided by the five-second flashing light on St. Honorat, they picked out St. Jérômé from the velvety darkness that blankets sea and sky on a moonless night by the softly sensuous Côte d'Azur. Not far distant, Cannes strung out a necklace of lights from La Bocca to La Croisette, and the hills behind were pin-pointed with stars from the villas on their slopes.

Hallard took his motor-boat at a crawl round the jagged edge of the island, past the ruined château and over to the western end. There he brought her close to the bank in a cove where the scrub pines and balsam-scented brushwood scramble for the sparse soil between the red rocks.

Bourdion had said very little on the run from Monte Carlo to the Isle. He held himself correctly impassive and judicial, and what was passing in his mind was unreadable. Hallard began to fear that when they came to the treasure he would shy at "lifting" it; that he had underrated the honesty of this financier.

The cache had been cunningly devised. Buried under a heavy rock were some huge iron-bound chests, the smallest and least formidable of which had been pried open on a previous visit.

"*Voilà!*" said Hallard, with a gesture inviting the banker to examine for himself.

Bourdion plunged his hands inside and drew out some heavy gold-plate of antique pattern. He drew his breath in between his teeth as he held the heavy plate in his

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hands, feeling the weight of it and mentally assessing its value. Then suddenly he drew himself together with a start.

"What's that? Listen!" he flashed in an imperious whisper.

There were steps in the brushwood not far away. They were approaching steadily. Some one was coming in their direction.

With a quickness and litheness that one would scarcely have given him credit for, Bourdion laid down the plate and crept away to where the rocks led down to the cove, stepping with the carefulness of a cat. Hallard followed him without question. Arrived at the cove, the banker stood up boldly on the sky-line with his legs apart, arms tightly folded and chin sunk deep on his chest, looking out over the velvety-black sea—the Napoleonesque attitude.

The footsteps approached. Bourdion took no notice of them. Finally a voice said sharply:

"Messieurs, to what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

They turned round, and an astonishing figure met their gaze. An old man with white hair, white mustache and white imperial, very tall and erect and aristocratic in bearing, and dressed in the fashion of fifty years ago. In his hands was an amber-headed cane with silken tassels depending from it. He drew his brows together into a frown and asked again,

"Messieurs, what brings you to my island at this hour of the night?"

Bourdion rose to the occasion magnificently.

"Monsieur le Marquis," he answered, "I must express our deep apologies at this apparently unwarrantable intrusion. I take it that I am addressing Monsieur le Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac?"

The old aristocrat bowed stiffly.

"I had, of course, no idea that the island was inhabited. My visit here is on behalf of the Prince of Monaco. As you are no doubt well aware, his Serene Highness is an ardent student of oceanography. To aid his researches he is very desirous of erecting a biological station on one of these islands. St. Jérômé is particularly suited to his purpose, and he had asked me, as his financial adviser, to study the cost of the scheme. Hence my intrusion, for which I offer you a thousand apologies."

The banker had skilfully evaded the point of its being well after midnight—an odd time for a visit of inspection. But there was smooth deference in his tone. With grave courtesy he suggested that they should come to his ruined château—where, he informed them, he still kept a couple of living-rooms in being—and partake of a glass of wine.

BOURDION told the Marquis his real name, and began to chat with him in a particularly smooth and friendly way. In a very few minutes it became clear to Hallard what was the scheme underlying the talk. Now that the cache was left exposed, the Marquis might stumble upon it at any moment. Hence the necessity for immediate action. And when the wine had mellowed the interview sufficiently, the shrewd financier came to his point.

"It is extremely fortunate for me," he said, "that I have been able to meet you in this unexpected fashion. It saves me a lengthy journey to your home in the Pyrenees. I have decided to advise the Prince that this island is well adapted to his special purpose, and I can take it on myself to make you a substantial offer for it."

But the Marquis raised objection.

"I am of the old school," said he, "and I do not like to mingle hospitality with the discussion of monetary affairs. Let us leave such matters to the daytime and the lawyer's office."

Bourdion took up another of his Napoleonesque poses.

"Decision is a habit with me," he replied in the grand manner. "I owe my success to the rapidity with which I form my judgments. To-night, I am ready to buy. To-morrow, I might decide otherwise."

The old aristocrat frowned a little over this, but after a few moments of thought assented.

The negotiations were not protracted. The financier was shrewd enough to see that any haggling over price would offend against the dignity of his host and probably put an end to the affair. Accordingly, when the Marquis named the round sum of five hundred thousand francs—one hundred thousand dollars—he did not urge a lower sum, but offered half payment by immediate check, and the remaining half when the lawyers had formally investigated the title-deeds and made the requisite transfers. In the meantime, he carefully drew up a

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temporary agreement of sale which fully protected himself in law, and then took out a blank check from his wallet.

Hallard drew the banker aside for a moment and whispered,

"I don't quite see where I come in on this deal."

"You may trust to me, my dear friend," replied Bourdion, patting him on the shoulder reassuringly. "Believe me, this is the only possible course to protect our mutual interests."

One special point the Marquis made as Bourdion started to fill in his check for fifty thousand dollars.

"I have a strong prejudice against personal business dealings with the banks of the present Republican régime," he said. "I am of the old school, and look for a speedy restoration of the Royal House. Please be good enough to make your check an open one to bearer."

"It is a matter of indifference to me," answered Bourdion, with an inward smile at this absurd touch of Royalist sentiment, and drew out the check accordingly.

The old aristocrat courteously insisted on walking down to the cove and seeing his guests depart. He stood up, a strange figure of the dead past, till the motor-boat was swallowed up in the velvety night.

"We will cruise around till nearly daybreak," said Bourdion to Hallard. "By that time the Marquis will be soundly asleep. Then I want you to take me back to St. Jérômé and help me to remove the chests. Legally, they are now mine, but for safety's sake I prefer to have them under my hands."

His prudence was admirable.

IV

IN THE cold dawn, with a sea-mist wrapping its dripping veilings around them, they made St. Jérômé again and, after an infinity of trouble, managed to transfer the iron-bound cases to the boat.

There was a smile of intense satisfaction in the beady eyes of the financier as they made off to the open Mediterranean with the precious cargo on board. His procedure had been admirably legal; his position was entirely secure. The agreement of sale had been cunningly worded so as to leave a loophole for his lawyers to cancel the transaction, legitimately, should he find on examination that the treasure did not come up to his expectations.

But for John Hallard all this prudence was not so admirable. He fidgeted, and coughed uneasily, and finally shut off power and turned to the banker.

"My dear fellow," said he, "you must excuse my persistency, but we really ought to settle where I come in on this transaction."

"Certainly, certainly!" returned the financier blandly. "What I propose is this: Let us get the cases ashore, examine their contents, value them, and then decide on what share you ought to receive. Of course I recognize that you are morally entitled to a certain proportion of ——"

"The proportion can be settled now!" cut in Hallard sharply.

And then things began to happen which he certainly had not reckoned upon.

"You will take this boat into Monaco!" snapped the banker, with a glittering revolver leveled at his companion. "And at full speed! On your behavior between here and the harbor of Monaco depends whether I shall make use of a certain deposit-receipt you very rashly signed for property not your own!"

All the blandness had gone sheer from his voice, and Hallard realized with a jerk that the leveled revolver was no idle threat. The man was stark dangerous. Out on that mist-veiled stretch of water, hidden from human sight, any scruples would be ruthlessly thrust aside.

Hallard inwardly anathematized himself for his under-estimation of the banker's caliber. As an essential part of his plan he had relied on Bourdion's infatuation for Renie to make easy any demand for advance payment on the treasure. He had judged that the banker would place the hoodwinking of a husband before the acquisition of money. And now there had come a rude awakening. Having been used, he was to be thrown aside. To take the *Flying Fish* straight to Monaco and set the banker ashore with the treasure-chests would be ruin for the big scheme.

At such times a man does a world of hard thinking in a fractional space of time. Inside a couple of seconds Hallard had his new rôle mentally sketched out, and with an assumption of cowed obedience he started the engine. From the direction of the slowly-drifting mist-wraiths, his keen

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senses told him that they must have turned slightly off their course during the stoppage —and there lay the chance. He knew it, but did Bourdion?

He would drive full speed ahead, as ordered, and gradually edge off the wheel little by little. If Bourdion did not suspect, and the new rôle lay in keeping him from suspecting, they would be half-way to the coast of Corsica before the sun had chased away the mists. That would give time, and time was of ruby value that morning. Then, out on the open sea, he might be able to play a trick or two with the engine which would hold them prisoners for hours.

But Bourdion's wits were also keenly on the stretch. Presently he became suspicious, although there was no sight of land to influence him, and curtly ordered Hallard to fetch him a compass from out of the fore-locker where it was kept stored away. The leveled revolver made his order imperative.

Hallard obeyed.

And then, when the situation was at its blackest, Hallard's luck—like most of his profession, he was a firm believer in his lucky star—came full tilt upon him. Out of the fog rose up a black shape feeling its way through the veiling, and Bourdion shouted with a sudden shrill fear for Hallard to steer them away from danger.

John Hallard knew when to grasp at opportunity. In a fraction of a second he had decided to risk the menace of the revolver. Holding grimly to the wheel, he drove straight on to the black hull ahead of them.

The poor *Flying Fish!* It was her last trip. She crashed her nose into the iron hull of the Nice-Corsica mail-packet, crumpled up like an egg-shell and went down to her grave in the open Mediterranean. Both of her passengers jumped clear. Life-belts were thrown to them, and presently a boat was lowered to pick them up, feeling its way through the mist.

John Hallard heard the shoutings that testified to the fact that the banker had been picked up, but he swam silently away in the fog to where he judged the coast-line around Nice must lie some five miles away.

It was a big risk to take—a tremendous risk in that white shroud of mist which might easily prove a death-shroud.

Yet he had weighed up chances, and decided to swim for it. They would search about for him and waste nearly an hour before they gave him up for drowned. Then the mail-boat would proceed on her way to Corsica, the banker on board, and it might be ten o'clock before he could get to a telegraph wire. If there were one thing that might be reckoned upon with certainty, it was that Monsieur Octave Bourdion, with his treasure at the bottom of the Mediterranean, would send an imperative message to his bank to hold up the check he had given to the Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac.

But to have that message delayed until ten o'clock would be infinitely precious. It would give time—the time for which he played in that daredevil resolve to wreck the *Flying Fish* and swim for shore. Time was vital for the safety of Renie!

"BUT how could it affect your wife?" I had asked at this point in Hallard's own narrative to me.

He replied, "At eight o'clock that morning the banking establishment of Octave Bourdion & Co. at Monte Carlo opened its doors as usual for business. At eight-fifteen Renie presented an open check to bearer for fifty thousand dollars. The sum was a very large one for an open check, but the clerk counted out the money for my wife without hesitation. He drew his own conclusions. Probably it was not the first time he had honored a check from Monsieur Octave Bourdion in favor of a lady.

"At nine o'clock Renie was in a jewelry establishment at Nice turning her fifty thousand dollars into uncut jewels. Before ten she was safely on her way to Paris in a *rapide de luxe*."

"But the Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac—the owner of the island of St. Jérômé?" I inquired, a trifle bewildered. "I thought the check was in his possession?"

At this moment Laroche came out on the veranda of the bungalow with a stimulant for his master—a tall, erect, dignified figure.

"Allow me," said John Hallard, smilingly, "to introduce you to Cyprien, fifth Marquis de Mas d'Aloriac."

"And the treasure?"

"The real part of it—the bracelet, necklace and plate—stood me in for $3,500 or $4,000. The rest was rock and earth."

"And when Bourdion found out how he had been tricked?"

"That must have been a highly interesting time for the onlooker."

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The Agent at El Centro

by G. W. Ogden

WHY it was called El Centro (the center) perhaps the railroad official who presided over the naming of stations could not have told. If it was the center of that particular spot favored by civilization, it was also the beginning and the end. The only excuse, it appeared to any one who ever had occasion to pass through there, was the way in which the sun pelted it there in the aching white desert, centering its fury upon the small station with its double roof.

In El Centro there was one tree, a date-palm with leaves frayed and shredded at the tips by the wind. With this tree the station-agent faithfully shared his tepid drinking-water from the flat-car tank on the spur behind the building.

For this friendly service the palm threw a shadow a little bigger than a barrel on the bow window bulging out toward the track, between one and three o'clock in the afternoon, when the thermometer on a level with the agent's eyes marked 115 degrees inside the depot. It wasn't much of a shade, but it was the only one thrown by a green living plant big enough for a man to get under within fifty miles on either hand.

Just the little yellow station with its double roof and air-space between, the lone palm, the spur of track behind the depot for the water-car, and the long lines of telegraph poles diminishing away on either side until the eye lost them in the wavering distance. That was all at El Centro above the white earth, blighted and dead in its valley far below the level of the sea. All, of course, except the railroad, which was not rightly a part of El Centro at all, for it began and ended in other lands.

Over its gleaming rails the trains came from the world on the east, rushing toward the world on the west. As they swished past El Centro the brakemen threw off packets of newspapers and magazines, out of sympathy for the exile behind the bow window and for his wife, who shared his hard duty with him there in the lowest spot, and the hottest, on the North American continent.

On the west side of all the telegraph poles —low-set in the earth—there were bolted reënforcing strips, extending from the ground to the first cross-arm, to protect them from the cutting fury of blowing sand. For days together these sand blasts sometimes raged out of the west, so fearful in their force as to cut away the soft fiber of the poles like tallow. A few years in the open would finish one of them unless it had a face of hardwood to turn the teeth of the blowing pebbles and sand.

El Centro was known as the lonesomest place on the line. Travelers were greatly impressed with that feature of the place when a train stopped there occasionally for orders. Only that morning the east-bound passenger had been held there by the dispatcher for ten minutes while he worked out some problem to make clear going for it on account of a wreck near Yuma. While the train stood, several travelers got out.

"What a bleak, empty place!" said one of them to the agent. "Does anybody ever take the train here?"

"Yes, one man did," said the agent.

"Who in the kingdom of coyotes was he?"

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"The agent that was here before me."

"I see," grinned the tourist. "Well, does anybody ever get off?"

"One man did," replied the agent.

"What do you think of that?" marveled the tourist. "One man got off here, one man! And who was he?"

"Me," said the agent, turning to go about his affairs.

ON ONE particularly hot afternoon the agent was comforting himself with an agricultural paper from Kansas, for his ultimate hope lay in a quarter-section of Kansas land sown to alfalfa. About five years more of the desert watch would put him there, he figured, and five years are not so long when there is hope at the end. The agent's wife sat near him, humming a little tune, sewing contentedly. The office was their parlor. The rocking-chairs and phonograph were there, a rug on the floor. The shade of the date-palm had not yet reached the window.

At the clicking call of his instrument in the bow window the agent closed his paper, his thumb between the pages, bent forward, answered. Then the dispatcher's message came tumbling, like a flood. The agent's wife stopped sewing, listening. The dispatcher was frantically telling him that a helper engine had split a switch on the mountain-foot fifty miles to the west, and was hurling down the long grade toward his post. The dispatcher ordered him to hold the west-bound passenger train, due in less than an hour, and to *get out and stop that runaway engine!*

"He's crazy," said the agent. But he clicked back to his chief, briefly, assuringly; "OK."

"Stop it? He must be crazy!" said she.

They knew those helper engines. Great, black, hog-backed things, low, heavy; eight driving wheels; a big oil-tank. They were sullen force without beauty, grim as a force should be which reaches down into hades and lifts men to heaven. That was their work. Pushing trains up the mountain, lifting them out of the gray torment of desert to the green and gold of the fresh Californian orange groves.

And one of them was loose, rushing down a long, straight stretch of track that fell into the hole of the desert with grade enough to give wild speed to the low wheels, an eighty-mile wind behind it, and steam to help it on its death-dealing dash.

The dispatcher said, "Split a switch under full steam." They concluded that some one had started it while the crew was off for lunch. Anyway, it was coming, and down the line the west-bound transcontinental train which carried the high-priced traffic to the coast had left the nearest telegraph station, forty miles away.

"Stop that runaway engine," the dispatcher had ordered. And the agent had taken the job in two letters, without even the customary period between them. "OK."

So, it was up to him.

The only question was, how?

It was not possible even to sidetrack it, for the only siding in El Centro was the water-car spur behind the depot, and that let into the main line in the wrong direction. Throwing the switch would no no good—the engine would simply spring the point and run through. The agent began to consider rapidly that it was something of a job to stop a runaway engine unless a man had the means of stopping it at hand.

There wasn't even a tie to throw across the rails, not even a curve to help. Straight as a line can be drawn that track lay for more than one hundred miles. He hadn't a wrench or a claw-bar, so he couldn't tear out a rail, and there was no means of reaching the section foremen whose stations were seven miles distant on either hand, for there were no telegraph offices there, and little hope that either of them would happen along in time to do any good.

Every second day the bosses made it to the station for their mail, their orders being delivered to them from the passing trains by the dusty road-master on the rear. No, that was not a land favorable to the friendly or helpful intercourse of men. If a man had anything to do there he had to buckle in and do it. That was all. The section bosses had been there that morning; they wouldn't come again that day. Even if they should, they'd have to get there within an hour to be of any use.

Of course a man might go down the line until he met the passenger train, flag it, get the passengers off and let them smash. That is, if the runaway engine didn't pass him before the passenger came. And the chances were strong that it would reach El Centro a good bit ahead of the passenger, for the passenger was fighting along with a heavy train against the gale which was

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hastening the runaway down into the basin.

The agent turned these things over quickly, his wife throwing in a despairing word here and there, while he leaned forward, out of long habit rather than hope, his hands on the table of the bow window where the snapping instruments stood, peering into the dust clouds which swept the line, obscuring everything beyond a hundred yards.

"If I had a stick of dynamite I could do it," said he, "but I ain't got it."

"You mean you'd blow up the track?" she asked.

"I'd try it."

A thoughtful pause between them, while he turned over again rapidly everything on hand, from the sewing-machine to the frying-pan. The dispatcher was calling again, frantically.

"Oh, let him holler," said the agent, as his wife reached out to cut in and reply, "we've got to *act!*"

FROM BED-SPRING to butter-knife, there wasn't anything in that house that would derail an engine. Case-knives, cartridges—hold up there, cartridges—he had almost a box of loaded shotgun shells!

They set to work to pull the loads, emptying the powder into a pan. It looked a pitiful heap, not enough, he quickly concluded, to do it, for that tenuous line of belted steel would defy even dynamite. Still, the powder was the sole hope; it was the only force he had, save the strength of his naked hands.

"No use tryin' to tear up the track with that handful," said he. "I think the only chance I've got is to put it under a tie and touch it off as she comes down, then jump. Maybe it'll explode hard enough to lift a flange over the rail and turn her off the track. That's the only chance."

"We haven't any fuse," said she, "and even if we had, how could you time it? It might go off before the engine passed, or it might go off after."

"I'll twist a short fuse out of paper, one that'll last a second, or maybe half a second. I'll have to take my chances on jumpin' clear in time, that's all."

"You're not goin' to do it!" said she decisively.

"Why, of course," said he. "Didn't he say for me to stop that engine? Well, I'm goin' to do my best, anyhow, even if I fail."

He rolled a little fat fuse out of the flimsy paper on which train orders are written. "I'll go up the line a piece, for there's no use mussin' things up around the depot in case the blast does throw her off," said he. "You take some torpedos and a flag and run east as far as you can and stop 28, in case she comes before the engine passes you, that's the girl. Now, keep your eyes peeled behind you, for that runaway may get past me. She ought to be here in thirty minutes, if she ain't jumped the track somewhere, which let us hope she has."

"I'm not going to stir a step!" she whimpered. "You'll be killed, you can't get away in time. That fuse is nothing but a flash." Suddenly she brightened. "Oh, why didn't we think of that?" she cried.

"Of what, girl, what?"

"A flash—a flash from the wire!"

"You're right," said he, a little abashed. "Here I am jerkin' lightnin' every hour of the day and never think of usin' it when I need it most! I'll plant the charge and cut the wires, run 'em to it, make a relay with the batteries here in the office, and wait for that runaway hog. Just as easy!"

Investigation didn't seem to lower the risk greatly, for the only wires within reach were those running into the office. At the best he couldn't get more than thirty feet, and he'd have to plant his mine where the wires would reach it, that was plain. Still, he figured, he'd much rather take his chance of the engine plunging into the depot than of standing on the track in front of it until it was near enough to punch his eyebrows, and then touch off the blast and jump.

"Between the powder and the engine, they'd git me. The old lady's right," he reasoned; "I'm for the spark."

He got hold of the dispatcher and told him that he was going to cut the local wire. "Only chance to stop the engine," he said, cutting off then and paying no heed to his chief's imperative demand for more details.

His wife quickly weighed the new situation.

"If the blast throws the engine off, it'll smash into the depot and—and——"

"Oh, maybe not; like as not it'll go off on the other side," he cheered. "Now you run along and put out your torpedos for 28; she's due in seven minutes, but she'll likely be a little late on account of buckin' the wind."

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He hadn't even pliers for cutting the wire, but the hatchet served. "You'll only risk your life to save company property," said she, crying again. "You'll be killed, I know you'll be killed! Come with me—maybe we can stop 28 and get everybody off before the engine hits her."

"Now you look-a-here, little girl," said he, straightening from connecting the wires with his blast, "I'll be as safe in that depot as I am this minute, even if she does go off on this side. I tell you I have my doubts about this powder bein' able to do any good, anyhow. I don't believe it'll even shake that old hog."

"Then let me stay at the key and touch it off," she begged, "and you go and flag 28."

"Well, now, I would," said he soberly, fidgeting in his mind for some excuse to veil the danger and put her off at once; "I would, you see, honey, but I'm afraid some of these here gravels might fly in at the winder and hurt your eyes. That's all there is to it. It wouldn't be worth riskin' your eyes for a durned old engine like that mountain hog, would it now, honey?"

She looked steadily into his face a moment, picked up her flag and torpedos, a dry little sob in her throat, and ran down the track.

THE agent went back to his key, studying his watch as he walked. There was a fall of 2400 feet between El Centro and the place where the engine broke away. With steam on, an oil-burning engine would make the distance at a pretty good clip and still be going some when it got to El Centro, the agent knew, and with that wind behind it, no telling how far or how fast it would go.

Once a box car had blown out of a siding at the same place. He remembered that incident very well. But it jumped the track before it had gone five miles, the clip being too speedy for it. He couldn't hope that the engine would do that, for it was a rail-hugger, and too heavy to rock, no matter how fast it went. Still, he didn't believe it would ever get to El Centro.

Anyhow, he hoped that girl of his would not lose her head and get the torpedo signals mixed. If she did, they might run by her in that blinding dust-storm. Of course, he had the board turned on them; they couldn't get past the station, unless the storm hid it in the whirling gray dust. That had happened at El Centro, too. Green engineers had gone by in the daytime in storms like that, never knowing it was there. Seemed incredible, but it was true. Seemed incredible, too, that an engine should be expected to come thumping down a fifty-mile incline, fifty miles being a long distance for a runaway to pound it without going wrong, somehow. Without that wind she'd never make it. Maybe she wouldn't, anyhow.

But she had steam up, and the throttle was open. That was to be considered. Also, she was an oil-burner, and fuel was being poured into her all the time. That would keep her steam up as long as she had water. It looked bad, when a man came to sit down and figure it out, bad for 28 and all of those people aboard of her. Well, that is, if the blast didn't work. And he hadn't much confidence in a hatful of common gun-powder under the end of a tie.

"I don't believe it'd tip a handcar," he muttered gloomily.

That girl of his must be some distance down the line by that time. Six minutes and fourteen seconds she had been gone. He computed it with that exasperating exactness of railroad men, holding his watch in his palm. He hoped that she'd remember to keep her eye open for the runaway. It could bowl right up on to her in that screaming wind and she might not hear it, with the trouble about her skirts, and hair, and all. He leaned again into the recess of the bow window, looking up, then down the track, turning back to fasten his eyes upon the dusty west.

The palm-tree was tossing its long fronds wildly, its stiff trunk swaying. He could not see the first telegraph pole beyond the station in that direction, which he knew was less than sixty feet away.

"By golly," said he, "I hope she don't get her torpedo signals mixed; they'd never see a flag in this storm till they was right up on her."

There was nothing that sounded like a train either way.

"If that runaway goes past me," he muttered, straining into the whirling chaos of driving sand, "there'll be an awful muss of 28. She's late, she's nine minutes late, right now, and every minute she loses that runaway hog gains one on her."

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Suppose that girl of his, clear as her little bright head was, *did* get the signals mixed, and 28 ran by her! He had no reason, based on anything in all her helpful association with him, for such a fearful question. But it insisted on beating against his taut sense of conjecture, mainly because she was a woman. And women, no matter how men trust them, sometimes fail to fulfil grave trusts and obligations.

He wondered whether he would have time to run down the track a few hundred yards and plant torpedos. Wondered, straining his eyes into the surging hurricane of dust, panting as if the runaway engine might at that moment be sitting on his chest.

No, of course not, he must stick right there, his hand on the key, ready to throw the spark into that charge under the tie. He must stick there, win or lose, and let that terrific turmoil of thoughts, which age a man in an hour sometimes more than balanced living does in twenty years, boil and surge and pound in his brain, unable then, no matter how many better schemes for saving 28 might come to him, to put one of them in force.

That blast scheme seemed to him all wrong, and he was a blamed fool for thinking of it; a bigger one for tinkering around there with it until it was too late to do something sensible, like going with her, as she had suggested, and flagging 28. Why, if they'd left at once they could have met 28 four or five miles down the line, stopped her and got everybody off. That is, of course, if the runaway engine hadn't beaten them to 28.

But what kind of a man was he to stick around there and send that little woman out on a crazy day like that! Suppose she wandered away from the railroad, even twenty feet? She'd be lost, she'd run on, frantic, burned up with thirst, and the sand would cover her at last. And that last wouldn't be long. And he was sticking there to save company property. Company property! Precious little thanks he'd get for it; mighty little the company ever had done for him, mighty less it ever would do if he got himself bunged and crippled up in that fool scheme! He scorned himself, sweating in his agonizing humiliation.

"I had plenty of time," he groaned, "to put out torpedos if I'd 'a' went and done it."

He was becoming somewhat disgusted, and altogether impatient with that runaway, which made such a sensational start and such a fizzle of a finish, for by all conservative estimates it should have been there. He hadn't a bit of doubt, at that particular moment, although he hadn't considered it likely before, that the hog was lying with her nose in a sandbank somewhere up the line, her glorious dash for liberty ingloriously ended.

"That's about it," said he, dragging his eyes away from the west for a quick, half-glance down the track, flashing them back again into the wind. "Of course, she's jumped the track," he muttered, narrowing his eyes, peering hard ahead. "Jumped the—what in the——"

A thrill stiffened him like a steel wire. There she was, elephant-like, dim, growing plain out of the storm of sand without a sound to herald her approach! There she came, rolling down upon him, almost catching him off his watch!

Coming fast, too fast. He braced himself, sucking a short, quick breath. She grew large before him, with incredible suddenness, and he strained forward, his face against the window, to mark when she came to the spot.

The old hog seemed to pause a little, with a ponderous, stiff lifting of her forward part as the blast exploded under her. He thought with deep satisfaction that the weight of the engine had given force to the powder. That much he thought, and then she plowed into the bow window, shivering the side of the building, throwing him back among the furniture in the room. There was something across his chest which pressed with stifling weight, pressed until it felt that the pent blood must burst his head.

THE crew of 28 hurried to the station with the agent's wife, leaving the train two miles down the line where she had stopped it. They did not know whether the engine had come into El Centro yet they did not know but that it might bear down and crash into their own at any moment. The passengers were all off and well away from the danger of a collision, for she had not mixed her torpedo signals in the least.

They found the runaway engine, half its boiler's length inside the depot, and over against the wall they found the agent, under a pile of wreckage. His ribs were broken;

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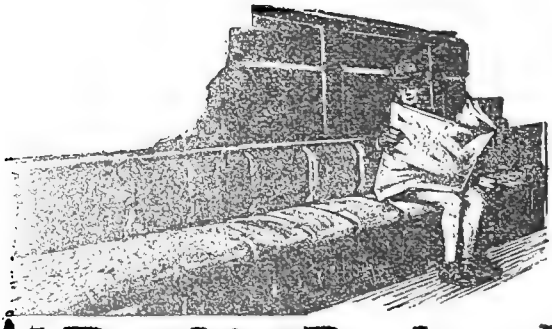
his right arm, which had cut in the spark, was broken; his left leg was broken below the knee. All counted, he was pretty well used up, but doctors on the train fixed him together again very well, and said that he would pull out of it as good as new.

It was early next morning before they had the hog out of the way, for it had just about buried itself in the sand with its spinning drivers, which kept digging away viciously until the side-rods struck the ground and stopped them.

They carried the agent to the baggage-car to send him to a hospital in Los Angeles.

As they rested him a moment before lifting him up to the car door, he saw the wreckage of his date-palm, which the runaway engine had broken down, strewn about the ground. Something which looked like a tear slipped down his cut, plastered face, something like a sob twitched his throat and got away from him, hard as he tried to stop it.

"There's all my good shade gone," said he, "there's all my good shade busted down and ruined. Ain't that a danged shame!"



Haroun Al Raschid Buchmuller Of Rag-Bag

by John A. Heffernan*

THE BUCHMULLERS were domiciled in new quarters—a very flossy apartment indeed, and they had been much interested in the furnishing thereof. Luckily Jacob's salary had grown with the business of Armitage & Barnes, as a sign and token of the appreciation of the big breakfast-food firm of the piquancy and effectiveness of his advertising methods, and it did not press upon their resources to purchase furniture in keeping with their quarters. During the process, little by little they became familiar if not friendly with their fellow tenants. There was one man in particular, who generally rode down in the elevator with Jake mornings, and whose rather shy nod Jake genially answered. Thus began with nod and counter-nod an *entente cordiale* which ripened into obvious observations regarding meteorological conditions.

*See page 410.

"Wet weather," Jake would gravely inform his fellow passenger, as if the said fellow passenger could not hear the gusty rataplan of the rain-drops on the window-panes.

"Fine day," the fellow passenger would remark the next morning, just as if Jake were ignorant of the fact that blue sky and liquid golden sunshine are elements of a fine day.

This fellow passenger's name was McIntosh. He was aggressively Scotch. Tall and slender and literary, he sported a humorous and even flippant exterior to protect the deep and sensitive sentimentalism that revealed itself only in his large round eyes. He professed an attachment for things to which he was really indifferent, so that the world, which loves to jab barbs into tender spots, would not, in his case, be able to find those that were truly tender.

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McIntosh was as full of hobbies as a blackthorn stick is of nobs, and they stuck out the same way. One of them was the collection of exceedingly grotesque Oriental images, another was chemistry. His wife, a slender and pretty young woman, wore all the time an expectant, not to say apprehensive, expression. She confessed to Mrs. Buchmuller that she was always wondering when it was going to explode.

It was some months before Jacob learned what was the occupation of his interesting fellow tenant. He knew that McIntosh had an office of some kind in the Singer Building, but what on earth was the business transacted therein Jake had been unable to conjecture. One day, however, the two men met at luncheon, and each of them laid upon the table a cylindrical package. Jake, as he sat down, deposited at his feet a brown-paper parcel which contained a leg of lamb he had purchased at Fulton Market, on his wife's commission.

"The eats on muh!" said Jacob, smiling all over his keen and aggressive features.

"Nix, I buy," replied McIntosh.

"I beat you to it," Jake protested. "You may dig for the next, but this is on me—like my hat. What shall we eat?"

"How about a blue-plate?" McIntosh asked, looking up from the menu.

"All to the joyous!" Jake assented. "Waiter, a couple of old-fashioneds and a couple of blue-plates! Feed here often, McIntosh?"

"Quite frequently," the other answered, sitting back. "You see, my studio is within a stone's-throw."

"Ah," said Jake, "you are the artist-thing?"

A little color crept into McIntosh's cheeks. He had unwittingly betrayed himself.

"Y-e-es," he admitted rather reluctantly, "I paint a few things."

"So that's the way you earn your living?" Jake said.

"It is *not!*" McIntosh promptly answered. "I get the grub-money making pictures for the funny papers."

"You don't like that?" Jake cut in shrewdly.

"Hate it!" answered McIntosh. "It's the rottenest gingerbread kind of stuff. All cheap and sordid, and Great-White-Wayey, and—if you promise to cut out the kid-stuff, I'll make a confession. I'm a wee bit romantic."

"In days of Gold, the Knights are old," piped Jake.

"Yet it isn't all dead," McIntosh said, his eyes lighting up. "There is real romance everywhere in the wide world yet, kid. Believe me, you can get it right here in little old New York if you know how to look for it. Teddy went to Africa for adventure, but, on the level, he could get it by going no farther than ten feet from Number Anything-you-like Broadway, New York, N. Y."

"We're all a little dippy on something," Jake said consolingly.

"Now look here," McIntosh insisted, "where did Haroun-Al-Raschid look for adventure? Was it in the city, or wasn't it?"

"Don't know Mr. Al Raschid," Jake replied, "but if there's anything in a name that guy was a high-note pusher of mining ventures and real-estate schemes."

"Wrong pew, bo," McIntosh said, shaking his head. "This chap was a magnificent Eastern lover of romance, and he went in disguise among the people of the big city."

"There never was any city but New York," Jake protested.

"Can it!" McIntosh advised him. "I know that you born Manhattanese, and some who have come from Dead Branch Corners and joined the natives, think that the Blazing Pike is the Meridian, and the sun rises in the East River and sets in the North River, but take it from me there have been other Radiant Roads, and Nineveh had a Tenderloin as tender, or as tough, as——"

"Boo!" Jake interrupted. "That stuff is all to the Mother Goose. I am hep to all that Arabian Nights dope. A fellow once handed it out to me about the fisher-gink who found the bottle and got the stopper out only to release a gigantic genii, whatever that may be, but *he* paid me the compliment of assuming that I knew he was a liar, while *you* are endeavoring to hand this to me as the real candy."

"Well," McIntosh admitted with a smile, "I don't mind saying that the fisherman and the genii story is a little too unusual for us to take as literal truth, but do not disbelieve it just because it is strange. Adventures just as strange as that of the fisherman occur to the fellows we meet in every-day life, right here in this town."

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"Not!" Jake declared with conviction. "Nothing but money ever happens in New York."

"Unbeliever!" McIntosh cried indignantly. "I'd be willing to bet that Romance has touched even you a hundred times and you knew it not. I pity you, man. What good is the rose to the chap who can't smell?"

"Nevertheless," Jake answered him as he cast up the items on the check, "the rose, she looketh good to muh."

They took up their parcels and departed, each going his way, McIntosh to his skyey studio in the Singer Building Tower and Jake to the warerooms of Armitage & Barnes. The advertising manager placed his packages in the ice-box for safe-keeping and from that box retrieved them when the work of the day was done and the tide of travel was homeward set. He had his little cylindrical package and his brown-papered leg of lamb under his arm as he got into a subway train and slid into a vacant seat near the front of the car. He spread his evening newspaper out and was soon immersed in the sporting items.

II

SO ENGROSSED was he in the study of "form" as it showed on the Canadian tracks, that he thought not at all of his immediate surroundings until his train was approaching the up-town station nearest his home. Then he looked up and was surprised to find that his fellow passengers had withdrawn from him, the strap-hangers, of whom there was the usual large number, being massed in the rear of the car. All the passengers seemed to have their eyes fixed upon him.

Jake turned to look at the man beside him, but lo, there was no man beside him! Letting his paper fall upon his knees, he calmly surveyed the crowd in the back of the car. Scores of eyes stared back at him, eyes in which there were bewilderment and perplexity and fear, and eyes also in which was the customary idiotic amusement always afforded to a New York crowd by any untoward happening. Beyond all question these eyes were centered upon him, and beyond question also they beheld something remarkable.

"Ah-h-h!" A slight sound, half ejaculation, half respiration, ran through the crowd. Jacob gazed downward at his newspaper. It had vanished.

A round-faced negro woman with a round body and a big basket on her arm giggled hysterically.

"Foh de Lawd!" she cried, "hee's pants is gwine away!"

"Uh!" grunted Jake, hastily looking down at his nether extremities.

"Oi-yoi!" he cried, as he gazed, his eyes growing wide.

Just above his left knee a great hole had appeared in the leg of his trousers and from this hole there radiated irregular lines of nudity, lines that rapidly extended laterally and longitudinally until they became mighty jagged fissures in the fabric of the garment. There was nothing to show where the cloth substance went to—it didn't burn, nor did it tear; in the words of the negro woman, it just "went away."

And, what was more alarming, it was still going. Even as Jake gasped in astonishment, the whole left leg disappeared, leaving him, as to that leg, like a "braw hielandmon" who'd lost his kilties.

Shrieks of shocked femininity made musical the lower end of the car. The crowd massed there divided, and through it came the uniformed figure of the conductor.

"Hey, you!" he cried, pausing some five feet away from Jacob, "wot's the matter wid you?"

"Nix on the conundrum-thing," Jake answered, his horror-stricken gaze trying to follow the receding line of clothing. "Search me, bo; how do I know?"

"But you can't stay on the car like dat!" vociferated the conductor. "Der's ladies present."

From out his nightmare, Jake glared at the uniformed man sardonically.

"Say, you big ivory-nut!" he cried angrily, "do you think I'm doing this for a joke? I can't stay on the car, huh? Well, what would you like me to do—fly out the window like a birdie, or burrow through the floor like a mole? Quit your kidding, and lend a rain-coat."

The conductor turned toward the passengers.

"The guy seems to have a kink in the coco," he explained to them. "The ladies had better look toward the back of the train till we reach the next station."

The suggestion was not a bad one. Jake's right leg was rapidly following his

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left; that is, the right leg of his trousers. The man from whom those indispensable garments were departing was pinching himself furtively in the hope that he might wake himself up. All the nightmare horror of the impossible situation was upon him. He would give a week's wage to get out of the car, but he shrank from what was to follow.

Before he could get home there was the public highway to be traversed for some six blocks, and how was a man, clothed and in his right mind from the waist up, to traverse those six blocks of public street? Jake groaned in despair. As he did so the leg of mutton under his left arm softened and burst like a gourd of wine, deluging him with a red fluid! A loud shriek of horror greeted this phenomenon.

Thereafter, there was no leg of mutton. It had not disappeared like his clothing, but it had melted and run all over him. The result was not beautifying; indeed, it was terrifying, and among the more timid of the passengers alarm increased to panic. There was a rush in the direction of the rear platform, and screams and curses mingled as men's pet corns were trampled by excited women in their haste to escape from the presence of the red-legged apparition.

"Lawd bress us an' save us!" shrieked the stout colored person as she tried to push her huge bulk through the mass. "Lawd bress us an' save us; it suah am de debbil!"

"Be ca'm, goldarn it! can't you be ca'm?" yelled the worried conductor. "He ain't comin' near you, an' if you don't look at him, you won't need to be worried none. Be ca'm, goldarn it! be ca'm!"

A glow illuminated the dark tube, and the train pulled up at a station. As soon as the doors were open there was a rush for the platform, and Jake found himself in the car now untenanted save for himself and the conductor. The uniformed minion of the transportation corporation advanced toward him.

"You've got to get off here, Bill!" he said determinedly, but tremulously.

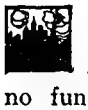
It was an ordeal for even so seasoned a metropolitan and self-possessed a philosopher as Jake Buchmuller, but he did his best to march out of the train and upon the platform with as much of his usual jauntiness as he could muster. There was in him the instinct of speed, and he walked as rapidly as he could. The crowd offered no obstruction; it parted readily, giving him wide gangway. At the ticket-seller's window he paused a second, with a sort of forlorn hope pallidly glimmering upon his face. "Say, bo," he appealed, "for the love of Mike, lend me a rain-coat or an ulster, or a pair of overalls!"

"Beat it!" the agent answered shortly.

And Jake "beat it." Up the stairway to the broad daylight of surface life he mounted, all his heart afire to run for it, but something of his wonted spirit holding him to a steady if rapid walking pace. The sensation he had caused in the train was nothing compared with that occasioned by his appearance upon the surface. A mob gathered at his heels, and to escape it he jumped on the platform of a surface car.

"Hey, if I pay my fare, you've got to let me ride," he said desperately to the open-mouthed conductor. "Here's your fare——"

He reached for his trousers pocket, but, alas, there was no trousers pocket. With a groan he swung from the car again to face the crowd in the street.



BY THIS time Jacob G. Buchmuller, child of the East Side and writer of humorous advertisements, was in no funny mood. The perspiration was breaking from him in cold beads, his tongue was dry and his eyes were getting the wild look of hunted things. His legs felt weak beneath him, and he staggered to the door of a restaurant.

"Say, lend me some pants, won't you?" he begged the proprietor who frowningly advanced upon him. "Or, at least, let me hide in that telephone-booth until I can call up somebody that knows me."

"Git!" commanded the restaurateur. "Git, before I call a cop!"

Jake flopped down into a chair, his face brightening.

"Gratefully yours for the helpful suggestion, old top," he said. "Nix on the move—call your cop!"

But the hope that had dawned upon Jacob soon faded. The restaurant man did not wait for the uniformed representative of the law's dread majesty; instead, with the aid of three waiters, he deposited Jacob on the curb. The exhausted victim of the strange adventure sat there, catching his breath, while in the forefront of the surrounding crowd stood the restaurateur. That person was panting from his recent

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exertions, and Jacob glared at him balefully. All the cruelty of the world seemed personified in him, and Jacob hated him with a heartfelt hate that would have withered him as he stood could its heat have been projected from Buchmuller's indignant soul.

"You great big sausage," he addressed the man, "just as soon as I get a pair of pants I'm going to push that map of yours all to the northwest-by-north, you purple-faced porpoise! I'll teach you to have a little decency about you, you big greasy fried oyster!"

"Ring de bell! Aw, ring de bell!" advised a sharp-featured newsboy.

"Say, sonny," said Jake, turning to him, "I'll give you half a dollar if you'll lead a cop to me."

"Aw, cheese it; he t'inks he's Rocky-feller," the young New Yorker answered derisively.

From the face of the grinning imp Jake shifted his glance back to his old enemy, the restaurant keeper. As it alighted upon that gentleman's portly figure Buchmuller's eyes bulged and then there broke from him a joyful cackle.

"Oi-yoi!" he screamed, pointing, "he's got it; he's got it!"

The crowd looked down at the legs of the vender of things to eat. Already the signs of disintegration were visible; to all it was evident that that gentleman's trousers were going away from him. The right leg was bare from the knee down, and as the crowd scrambled back from the new victim, the unhappy man gave a scream of horror, and with a face suddenly blanched, rushed into his restaurant from which all the diners immediately and precipitately emerged.

Jake's joyous "Oi-yoi!" followed him in.

The street was now thronged from one side to the other with curious New Yorkers, all endeavoring to get a look at Jake, but none daring to get too close to him. The surface cars were blocked, and conductors and motormen, as well as the drivers of obstructed trucks and the chauffeurs of halted automobiles, joined the throng. Through the press at last there came the thing Jake most devoutly desired, a policeman in a lovely blue uniform with buttons of golden luster.

"Come, come and take me!" Jake saluted him.

"I'd a bit rather take the whoopin' cough," Policeman Murphy answered, after a careful survey. "What ails ye, at all?"

"Cut out the catechizing-thing!" Jake appealed to him. "If I told you what I really think is the matter you'd think mine a gorgeous case of the dips in full and fragrant bloom. I just don't know where muh pants have gone, that's all."

"Faith, 'tis a pipe that has a rich nutty flavor," the policeman commented. "We'd better be on the way to the house, the Captain'll be wantin' to see you. Come, like a good little boy; he'll give you a stick of candy. Be the way, me lad, what's the foony-lookin' thing ye have under your arm?"

"Bird-seed," Jake answered.

"Would ye moind lettin' me carry it fer ye?" said Mr. Murphy, as he took it from Jake and slipped it into his hip-pocket with his "billy." "I don't know, at all, whether to take ye to the house along the street or call the wagon. It's but a short foor blocks; I guess we can walk it."

Thump!

The sound came from the sidewalk at the policeman's heels and startled him. He turned quickly and looked down at his "billy," which lay upon the pavement. But there was something strange about it, the leather wrist-strap and the little silken tassels were gone. Beside it, as it lay on the sidewalk, was Jake's cylindrical package. Mr. Murphy bent to pick both up. As he did so Jake took a look at him and let out a scream that brought the astonished policeman jerkily to the perpendicular.

"What—?" exclaimed Mr. Murphy, but even as the question formed on his lips he paused, and with a careful hand reached around exploratively. He was seeking the back of his trousers leg. It wasn't there!

"— the divvil!" Mr. Murphy concluded the ejaculation.

"You've got it, pal, that's all," said Jake. "Same thing happened to muh. Clothes just went away, that's all. Going, going, gone! See, the right leg has left you and the left is leaving fast!"

Truly, with speed was the area of annihilation spreading, and Mr. Murphy, his blue eyes a little troubled and his round, florid face rosy with blushes, laid a hand on Jake's shoulder.

"Come on, quick!" he commanded, "while we're fit to be seen in the street, at all, at all!"

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And so they marched up the avenue, the red-legged Jake and the trouserless Policeman Murphy, whose cheeks were as red as Jake's nether limbs, and behind them formed a procession of sightseers drawn by as queer a spectacle as ever interested New Yorkers.

III

BEFORE the lieutenant at the desk the breekless policeman arraigned his breekless prisoner at last, while Lieutenant O'Reilley gazed down at them both, speechless with astonishment.

"Where are yer pants, Murphy?" he demanded, when the breath returned to him.

"Not the slightest idea have I," replied Murphy unplausibly, but truthfully. "I found this young feller, sittin' as ye see him now, an' I started to take him in. At which time, be gob, me breeches blew away! An', worse luck, they were the new pair I just bought fer the inspection."

"Tell it to Sweeny," remarked Mr. O'Reilley with biting sarcasm.

"It's straight dope just the same," said Jake, coming to the rescue of the patrolman. "Mine faded off me in a subway train."

"Was that all that happened?" Mr. O'Reilley was still sarcastic.

"No," said Jake, grinning, "it hit another gazebo too. I tried to get into a restaurant and a rough-neck hunk of beef tossed me out, and *his* breeches blew away, likewise and yoost de same."

Lieutenant O'Reilley stroked his chin. There wasn't the slightest sign of liquor upon either man, but this was a most amazing tale, most amazing!

"What's the parcel you have under 'yer arm, Murphy?" said the lieutenant at last, groping for a clue.

"That," said Jake, "oh, that's bird-seed I bought down town this morning."

Murphy ripped the cardboard cover of the package open, and disclosed a glass jar at which Jake gazed as at a new marvel. It was cracked at the bottom, and the last few drops of a liquid it had contained were oozing through the crack.

"The bird that ate that kind of seed *was* a bird!" said Mr. Murphy.

"The fisher-guy's bottle!" exclaimed Jake. "On the level, officer, a genii, whatever that may be, has been passing one over on you and me."

The situation was more than puzzling to the man at the desk. Quite plainly Policeman Murphy was not inebriated, and, notwithstanding his appearance, there was something of cool nerve in Jacob's eye that gave the lie to the suggestion of insanity. Besides, the same thing had hit both men; whatever it was that had stripped the prisoner had stripped his captor also.

"Murphy, man, what do ye make of it?" the bewildered lieutenant asked at last.

"It has got me," the patrolman answered, "but," he added, looking up, faintly hopeful, "maybe I could think better with me pants on."

"Go and get 'em then, for the love of Mike!" the lieutenant ordered. "And, while you're back there, reach into my wardrobe and get an old pair of my blues for this fellow."

Murphy departed, returning presently with the uniform trousers, and the lieutenant turned to Jake.

"What's yer name and age, kiddo?" he asked, his inked pen poised over the "blotter."

"Jacob G. Buchmuller," the prisoner answered, "and I'm a skittish young thing of thirty-two. I live in an apartment about two blocks from here, and I'm employed as advertising manager by Armitage & Barnes. And, 'Big Tim' loves me like a favorite child."

"That's what they all say," was the obviously unimpressed lieutenant's comment upon Jake's claim to friendship with political powers. "Some of them add," he went on, his eyes upon the "blotter" in which he was writing, "that they are the Mayor's Aunt Mary, or the Governor's great-grandfather."

Jake grinned. "On the level, bo," he said, "human nature is funny hop. A few minutes ago I wanted to get in here as badly as ever I wanted a thing in my life, but now that Mr. Murphy has outfitted me in these swell blue trousers of yours, I'd just love to get out. Believe me, pants is another name for courage. Without them a man loses his nerve, but with them he can face the world undaunted, eh what?"

"Is that firm you work for the breakfast-food factory?" O'Reilley inquired.

"You bet you!" Jake answered. "Call up old Tom Armitage. His number is 1930 Audubon. He'll go the bail-thing for me."

The Lieutenant picked up the telephone transmitter.

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"Headquarters?" he called. "This is the Ninety-fifth. Get me one-nine-three-o Audubon."

A pause followed, and then Jake heard the lieutenant's voice again.

"Is this Mr. Armitage? This is the Ninety-fifth Precinct Police-station. We have a fellow without any pants on here. He says he works for you—J. G. Buchmuller. Yes, yes. All right, sir. Ha-ha! All right, we'll turn him loose and take chances. Thanks. Send 'em up to my house—O'Reilley, seven-seven-seven a Hundred-and-sixty-first. Thanks. Ha-ha! Good-by."

HE SWUNG around upon Jake, the prospect of a box of good cigars making him quite a genial and friendly fellow.

"Your boss says you're apt to do any kind of a nutty thing, but you're not dangerous. Run along, now, and send me back my pants as soon as you get your own. We'll keep the bottle and send it to the chemist at headquarters. We want to find out what was in it."

"When you find out," Jake asked, "let me know."

Jake had the sensations of one who returns to long-remembered scenes after a protracted absence when he entered the elevator. The plump young darky in green and gold paid no attention to the fact that the blue trousers were coiled around Jake's legs like a monster python around the limb of a tree. Even Celia's face seemed strange as he entered the dining-room and sank into a comfortable chair. The table had been spread an hour, and that lovely countenance upon which dwelt usually a peace celestial had an ominous pucker upon it. She was tapping with her finger-tips on the white table-cloth, and as she reached for the tinkle-bell she remarked:

"You are *only* an hour late for dinner!"

"Um," Jake murmured. He was deep in a reverie.

Celia looked keenly at the countenance of her husband.

"Jacob," she said suspiciously, "where on earth have you been? What kept you?"

Jacob came out of his reverie with a jump.

"Never mind, kiddie," he said. "You wouldn't believe it if I told you." An absent look crept back into his eyes. "I wouldn't myself," he added enigmatically.

A look of alarm came over Celia's face.

"Jacob," she said, "is there — is there——"

But the door-bell tinkled and the maid announced Mr. McIntosh; who entered upon the very heels of the announcement. Mrs. Buchmuller rose to greet him graciously, but Jake only leaned back, his napkin in his hand, and gazed at him with obvious suspicion.

"Say, old fellow," McIntosh said pleasantly, "do you know we must have mixed packages at the restaurant this noon. When I got home I found I had this cylinder of bird-seed instead of a little jar of chemicals I bought at McKellog & Bottoms'."

"Well," said Jake slowly, "that little jar of yours was *the* goods all right, all righto. The bottom cracked on the way up-town in the subway, and whatever came out of it ate up my trousers. Also those of a ham-and-egg manufacturer, and also those of a very decent sort of a cop. It was all to the warm stuff, that little jar of yours, believe *me!*"

McIntosh looked first alarmed, second relieved, third distressed.

"My goodness, man!" he cried, "you're lucky it nae burned the flesh off your banes! It naturally took the line of least resistance, and the fabric of your clothing contained it, so it didn't reach the flesh."

"Gooood night!" exclaimed Jake, as he threw up his hands. "Show me, kid, show me! What do you mean by saying my trousers contained this stuff?"

"Held it, you know!" McIntosh explained.

"Ya-ya. I know *not!*" declared Jake. "I only know it robbed me of everything from the waist down, and it was an Empire waist at that, bo. What do you call the stuff?"

"Why, it was oil of vitriol," McIntosh said.

Jake shook his head.

"Nixerino, never and not!" he said. "It was the gink that came out of the fisherman's flask, you bet you! And, believe me, it gave me some warm time. For just a while this P. M. Sinbad the Sailor and all the whole Arabian Nights bunch had nothing on me; and believe me, for about half an hour I didn't have much on me, either. I've got 'em all buttoned on the board for real adventure, I tell you; I'm the only simon-pure real thing romance-player left in the loft! Mr. Haroun-Al-Raschid Buchmuller of Rag-Bag, bo—that's muh!"

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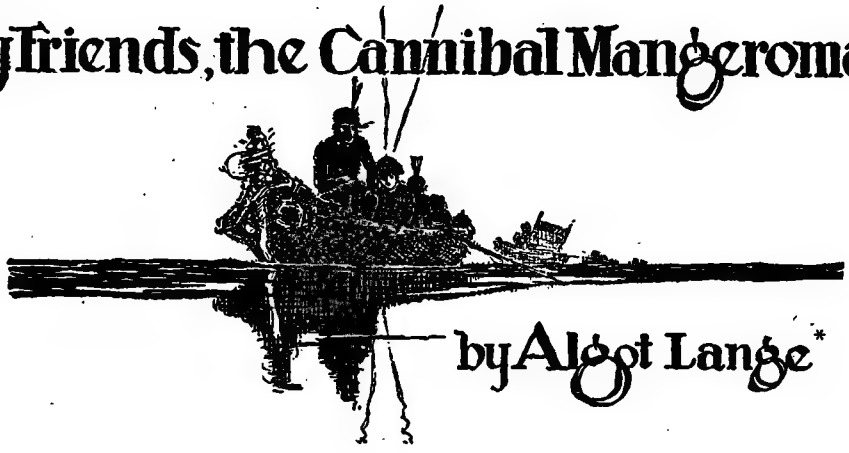
My Friends, the Cannibal Mangeromas



by Algot Lange*

EDITOR'S NOTE—The author, previous to his coming among the Mangeromas, had set out with a number of natives from a rubber-camp near Remate de Males, in western Brazil toward the Peruvian boundary, to explore practically unknown jungle. Terrific hardships, fever, starvation, snakes and wild beasts took their toll of the explorers. All perished, one by one, except Mr. Lange, and he himself stricken with fever, had come almost to death' door. The present article takes up his adventures at this point.

I HAVE no clear knowledge of what happened to me throughout the rest of the night; my madness had descended mercifully upon me and left me insensible. It was night before I could arouse myself from my collapse. The fire was out and the forest dark and still, except for the uncanny cry of the owl, "the mother of the moon."

I could not walk any more, so I crept on all fours through the brush without any object in my mind—just crept, like a sick, worthless dog.

Only one incident of that night I remember quite distinctly. I was crawling through the thicket, making small and miserable progress, my insensible face and hands torn and scratched by spines and thorns, when something bumped against my thigh. I clutched at it and my hand closed around the butt of my automatic pistol.

The weapon came out of its holster unconsciously, but, as I felt my finger rest in the curve of the trigger, I knew that some numbed and exhausted corner of my brain had prompted me to do this thing. Indeed it did not at the moment seem particularly wicked. With the pistol in my hand and the safety latch released, I believed that the rest would have been easy.

What prospects did I have of escaping the dreadful jungle? None! There was no shadow of hope for me, and I had long ago given up believing in miracles. For eight days I had scarcely had a mouthful to eat. The fever had me completely in its grasp. And here I was all alone, more than a hundred miles in the absolute wilderness! I measured cynically the tenaciousness of life, measured the thread that yet held me among the number of the living, and I felt now what the fight between life and death meant to man brought to bay.

Surely no man could have been brought lower or to greater extremity, no man ever faced a more hopeless proposition. But somehow the pistol was not used.

All night long I crawled through the underbrush, having no sense of direction whatever. For hours I moved along at the absolute mercy of any forest beast. The damp chill of the approaching morning came to me with a cooling touch and restored me once more to some extent of sanity. My clothes, smeared with mud, were almost torn from my body, hands and face were torn and my knees a mass of sores and bruises.

I have a vague recollection of hearing the barking of dogs. I changed my crawling direction to head for this, and suddenly I saw in front of me a sight which had the same effect upon me as would a rescuing steamer upon a shipwrecked sailor.

To my confused senses it seemed to me that I saw men and women and children, and a large, round hut; I saw parrots flying

*See page 411.

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across the open space in brilliant, flashing plumage and heard their shrill screaming.

I cried aloud and fell forward, when a little curly-haired dog jumped up and began licking my face, and then I knew no more —the reaction had set in.

RESCUED FROM THE JUNGLE BY CANNIBALS

WHEN I came to myself I was lying in a comfortable hammock in a large, dark room. I heard the murmur of many voices, and presently a man came over and looked at me. I did not understand where I was, but thought that I finally had gone mad, and fell asleep again. When I next awakened I saw an old woman leaning over me and holding in her hand a gourd containing some chicken broth which I swallowed slowly, not feeling the cravings of hunger any more—in fact, not knowing whether I was alive or not. The old woman had a peculiar piece of wood in her lips, and looked very unreal to me. And soon I fell asleep again.

On the fifth day thereafter, so I learned later, I began to feel my senses return, my fever began to abate and I was able to grasp the fact that I had crawled into the *maloca*, or tribal village, of the Mangeromas. I was as weak as a kitten and, indeed, it has been a marvel to me ever since that I succeeded in coming out of the jungle alive. The savages, for such they were, by tender care and strengthening drinks, wrought the miracle, and brought back to life a man who was as near dead as he well could be. They fed me at regular intervals, thus checking my sickness, and when I could make out their meaning I understood that I could stay with them as long as I liked.

I had luckily kept my eye-glasses on my nose during the previous hardships, and I found these in their position when I awoke; my khaki coat was on the ground under my hammock. The first thing I did was to ascertain whether the precious contents of its large pockets had been disturbed, but I found them all safe. My hypodermic outfit was intact and was used without delay, much to the astonishment of some of the men standing around the hammock. I had the automatic pistol strapped around my waist and felt perfectly safe for the time being.

When my head was clear enough to raise, I turned and began my first visual exploration of my immediate surroundings. The big room I found to be one colossal hut, forty feet high and one hundred and fifty feet in diameter, thatched with palm leaves and with sides formed of the stems of the pachiuba tree. It was the communal residence of the entire tribe, consisting of two hundred and fifty-eight souls. A single door and a circular opening in the roof were the only apertures of this enormous hut. The door was very low, not more than four feet, so that it was necessary to creep on one's knees to enter the hut; this was closed in the night-time, which was always about six o'clock, by a sliding door which fitted very snugly, for never during my stay did I notice any mosquitos or *piums* in this dark and cool room.

The next day I could get out of my hammock, though I could not stand or walk without the aid of two women, who took me over to a man I later found to be the Chief of the tribe. He was a well-fed man, who, through his elaborate dress, distinguished himself from the rest. He had a very pleasant, good-natured smile, and almost constantly displayed a row of white, sharp-filed teeth when talking. His bearing gave me some confidence, though I very well knew that I here lived among anthropophagous Indians, whose reputation in this part of the Amazon is anything but flattering.

I prepared for the ordeal without any special fear—my feelings seemed by this time to have been pretty well exhausted, and the appreciation of actual danger considerably reduced as a result of the gamut of terrors which I had run.

I addressed the Chief in the Portuguese language which I had learned during my stay in the Javary region and also in Spanish, but he only shook his head. All my efforts were useless. He let me know in a friendly manner that my hammock was to be my resting-place and that I would not be molested. His tribe was one that occupied an almost unknown region, and had no connection with white man or Brazilian, or other people near the river.

I tried in the course of the mimic conversation to make him understand that I with six companions from a big chief's *maloca*, meaning Colonel da Silva and the Floresta headquarters, had penetrated into the woods near this mighty chief's *maloca*, and that the men had died from fever, and that I was left alone and had managed to

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find my way to the free men of the forest.

He nodded, and the audience was over; I was led back to my hammock to dream and eat, and dream again.

ALTHOUGH the Chief and the men had presented figures wholly unknown to me, yet it did not seem to distract me at the first glance, but as my faculties slowly returned to their former activity I looked at them and found them very strange figures indeed. All the men had two feathers inserted in the cartilage of the nose—at some distance it appeared as if they wore a mustache; besides this the chief had a sort of feather-dress reaching halfway to his knees—moutum feathers tied together with plant fibers.

The women wore no clothes whatever, their only ornamentation being the oval wooden-piece in the lower lip and a fancifully arranged design on face, arms and body. The colors which they preferred were scarlet and black, and they procured these dyes from two plants that grew in the forest close by. They would squeeze the pulp of the fruits and apply the rich-colored juice with their finger, forming one scarlet ring around each eye, outside of this a black and larger ring, and finally two scarlet bands from the temples to the chin.

There were probably sixty-five families in this village hut, all having their little households scattered throughout the floor without any separating partitions whatever. The many poles which supported the roof formed the only way of distinguishing the individual households. The men had strung their hammocks between the poles in such a way that these formed a triangle; in the middle of this a fire was always going, and here the women were doing their cooking and broiling of the game that the men brought home at all times of the day. The men slept in the hammocks; the women and their children on the ground around the little family triangle.

The hospitality of my friends proved unbounded. The Chief appointed two young girls to care for me, and though they were not startling from any point of view, specially when remembering their labial ornaments and their early developed abdominal hypertrophies, they were as kind as any one could have been to me, watching me when I tried to walk and supporting me when I became too weak.

COMPULSORY CANNIBAL SOUP

THERE was a certain broth they prepared which was delicious, but there were others which were nauseating and which I had to force myself to eat. I soon learned that it was impolite to refuse any dish that was put in front of me, no matter how repugnant. One day the Chief ordered me to come over to his family triangle and have dinner with him. The meal consisted of very tender fried fish which was really delicious, followed by three broiled parrots, with fried bananas, and a soup which I could not swallow.

The first mouthful almost choked me—the herbs that were used were so bitter and gave out such a rank odor that my mouth puckered and the muscles of my throat refused to swallow. The Chief looked at me and frowned, and then, remembering the forest from which I had lately arrived and the starvation and the terrors, I closed my eyes and swallowed the stuff, seeking what mental relief I could find in the so-called self-suggestion.

But I had the greatest respect for the vindictive, unreasoning nature of these sons of the forest; easily insulted, they are well nigh implacable. This incident shows upon what a slender thread my life hung. The friends of one moment might become the vindictive foes of the next.

Besides the Great Chief there were two sub-chiefs, so that in case of sickness or death there would always be one regent.

The distinction of these chiefs was plainly marked by their dresses, which consisted of fancifully arranged feather belts of arara, moutum and trumpeter plumes, covering the shoulders and abdomen. These dresses were made by the young women of the tribe, women who wanted to become the favorites of the Chief and sub-chiefs. They often worked for months on these feather dresses, and when finished presented them to the particular chief whose favor they wished.

THE CANNIBALS AT HOME

THERE seemed to be little sickness among these people, in fact, during the five weeks that I spent among them I never saw a case of fever or anything else. When a man or woman died, the body was carried far into the woods and cremated. The party

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would then leave in a hurry and never return to the same spot; they were afraid of the Spirit of the dead. They told me that they could hear the Spirit far off in the forests at night when the moon was shining.

The men were good hunters and were experts in the use of bow and arrows and also with the blow-gun, and never failed to bring home fresh supplies for the village; these supplies were always divided equally, so that no one should receive more than he needed for the day. At a glance the men might seem lazy, but then they had no landlord nor grocer nor butcher to worry about.

I was allowed to walk around as I pleased, everybody showing me a kindness for which I shall forever remember these "savages." I frequently spent my forenoons on a tree-trunk outside the *maloca* with the chief who took a particular interest in my personal welfare. We would sit for hours and talk, he pointing at some object and naming it by its Indian name, and I repeating it until I had the right pronunciation. Thus, gradually, by watching these men and women as they would come and go, day after day, I was able to understand some of their language and learned to answer fairly satisfactorily.

THE CHIEF GOES SOLOMON ONE BETTER

THE word of the chief was law, and no one dared appeal from his decisions. In fact, there would have been nobody to appeal to, for the natives believed him vested with some mysterious power which made him the ruler of men. I once had occasion to see him use the power that had been given him.

I had accompanied two young Indians into the forest. We had gone scarcely a mile from the *maloca* when we discovered on the opposite side of the creek, some hundred yards distant, a wild hog rooting for food. We were on a slight elevation ourselves, and under cover of the brush, the hog being exposed to view on the next knoll. Almost simultaneously my companions fitted arrows to their bowstrings. Instead of shooting point-blank and with the two arms, they placed the great and second toes on the cord, and with the left arm gave the proper tension and inclination to the bows, which were at least eight feet long. With a whir the poisoned arrows left the cords, sailed gracefully in the air, describing a hyperbola, and plunged into the animal at each side of his neck a little distance back of the base of the brain. The hog dropped in his tracks.

Tying his feet together with plant fibers, we slung the body over a heavy branch and carried it to the *maloca*. All the way the two fellows disputed as to who was the owner of the hog, and from time to time they put the carcass on the ground to gesticulate and argue. I thought they would come to blows, and when they appealed to me I declared that the arrows had descended so rapidly that I had been unable to follow them with my eyes and could not tell which arrow had found its mark first.

A few yards from the hut my two friends fell to arguing again, and a crowd collected about them, cheering first the one then the other. My suggestion that the game be divided was rejected as one of very poor judgment. Finally, the dispute grew to such proportions that the Chief sent a messenger to learn what was the trouble.

Immediately the crowd dispersed and the combatants quieted down. The messenger returned saying that the Great Chief would judge the case and would request the men to enter the *maloca*. With some difficulty the hog was dragged in through the door-opening, and all the inhabitants crawled after.

The Chief was decked out in a new and splendid feather dress, his face was newly painted with the juice of the urucu plant, and his nose was supplied with a new set of moutum feathers. He was sitting in his hammock which was made of fine braided, multi-colored grass fibers and fringed with numerous squirrel-tails. The whole picture was one which impressed me as being weirdly fantastic and extremely picturesque, the reddish, flickering light from the fire adding a mystic color to the scene.

On the opposite side of the fire from where the Chief sat lay the body of the hog, and at each side of it stood the two hunters, straight as saplings, and gazed stolidly ahead. In a semicircle facing the Chief and surrounding the hunters sat the tribe, squatted on the ground. The Chief motioned to me to take a seat on the ground alongside the hammock where he was sitting. The men told their story, now and then looking to me for an affirmative nod of the head.

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After having listened to the argument of the two hunters for a considerable time without uttering a single syllable, and the while regarding the crowd with a steady, unblinking expression and a trace of a satirical smile around the angle of the mouth that suited him admirably, the Chief spoke up and said,

"The hog is mine—Go!"

The matter was ended with this wise judgment, and there seemed to be no disposition whatever to grumble or re-appeal to the Chief.

THE POISONED STREAMS

MY LIFE among the Mangeromas was not entirely free from adventures, and I was more than once within an inch of meeting death. In fact, I think that I looked more squarely in the eyes of death in that peaceful little community than I ever did in the wilds of the jungle or in my most perilous adventure.

I had occasion to watch some of the hunters one day in the act of poisoning the creek that flowed past our *maloca*. They threw quantities of pulp of a certain bitter root into the water at a place some distance below our hut. It was then explained to me that the Mangeromas often poison the stream in this manner in order to get rid of their enemies the Peruvians, the only humans that they dread and fight. It had been rumored that a party of Peruvian rubber-hunters might be coming up the creek and this was always a signal for alarm among the Indians.

Although you could not induce a Brazilian to go into the Indian region, the Peruvians are more than willing to go there, because of the girls. A few Peruvian *caboclos*, or half-breeds, will sneak close to the *maloca* at night, force the door, which is always bolted to keep out the Evil Spirit, but which can be cut open, and fire a volley of shots into the hut. The Indians sleep with their blow-guns and arrows suspended from the rafters, and before they have time to collect their sleepy senses and procure their weapons, the Peruvians in the general confusion have carried away some of the girls.

Therefore the Mangeromas hate the Peruvians, and will go to any extreme to compass their death. The poisoning of the rivers is effectuated by means of a plant-root that is found throughout the Amazon valley and is used by many tribes to poison the fish in the waters. This method often results in injury to the innocent, and even to their own people, though their smell is so well developed that, as a rule, they can detect the presence of the poison by the odor emanating from the water.

It seems strange that during my stay among the Mangeromas, who were heathens and cannibals, I saw no signs of idolatry. They believed implicitly in a Good and an Evil Spirit. The Good Spirit was too good to do them any harm and consequently they did not bother with him, but the Evil Spirit was more active, and could be heard in the dark nights howling and wailing far off in the forest, as he hunted for lonely wanderers whom he was said to devour.

Thinking to amuse some of my friends, I one day kindled a flame by means of my magnifying glass and a few dry twigs. A group of ten to twelve Indians had gathered, squatted in a circle about me, to see the wonder that I was to show them, but at the sign of the issuing smoke and the bursting out of the tiny flame they grew scared and ran to the hut, where they called for the Chief, who appeared on the scene with his usual smile.

He asked me to show him what I had done. I applied the focused rays of the sun to some other dry leaves and twigs, and finally the flames broke out again. The Chief was delighted, and asked me to make him a present of the magnifier. As I did not dare insult the Chief, I showed him how to use it and presented it to him.

TWO PERUVIANS ARE TRAPPED AND EATEN

SOME time after, I learned that two Peruvians had been caught in a trap made for the purpose. The two unfortunate men, having spent all the night in the nine-foot-deep pit, were discovered the next forenoon by a party of hunters, who immediately killed them with unpoisoned arrows. In distinction to the North American Indian, they never tortured their captives, but killed them as quickly as possible.

I will here state the bare facts, without any attempt at hiding anything or making these people appear better or worse. It is true that they were cannibals, but at the same time their habits and morals were remarkably clean. Without their good care

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and hospitable treatment, I have no doubt, I would have followed my brave companions out in the dark, green jungle.

But to return. The hunters cut off the hands and feet of the dead Peruvians, pulled the big-game arrows out of the bodies, and returned to the *maloca*, where they had an audience with the Chief. Shortly afterward the village was preparing for a feast, the fires were rebuilt, the pots were cleaned and a scene followed which, if it had not happened, would have made me think of this little world out in the forests as an ideal, pure and morally clean little community. But now I hastened to my hammock and simulated sleep, as I knew that otherwise I would have to partake of a horrible meal of human flesh. It was sufficient for me to see that they stripped the flesh of the palm of the hands and the soles of the feet and fried these in the lard of the tapir.

Strange thoughts were crossing through my brain when I saw the men bend over the pans to see whether the meat was done. How long would it be before they forgot themselves and placed my extremities in the same pots and pans?

THE MYSTERIOUS WOURAHLI POISON

I HAD long expected to see the hunters prepare the mysterious *wourahli* poison, which acts so quickly and painlessly, and which allows the game killed in this manner to be devoured without interfering with its nutritive qualities. Only three men in this camp understood the proper mixing of the ingredients, although everybody knew the two plants from which the poisonous juices were obtained. One of these was a vine that grew close to the creeks, and the other was the bulbous roots of a tall herb which was fairly frequent in these regions. The bark of the first plant was scraped into a gourd and the crushed roots of the latter mixed into a thick mass, after which a few of the large poisonous Tucandeirs ants were added, and the contents placed over a slow fire to simmer for several hours while the scum was being removed. After this the expert, who was a middle-aged Indian, scraped the thick, brown paste into a gourd which was bound over with some animal skin, and set aside for ripening.

When on their hunting excursions the men always carried a small amount of this powerful poison in a pouch of rubber strapped to their waist and were extremely careful in the handling of this, as the slightest scratch from a poisoned arrow would cause a quick and inevitable death.

I was so far recuperated by this time that I thought of returning to civilization, and broached this subject to the Chief, who answered me very kindly, promising that he would send me with some of the wourahli-men down to the Branco River, by the next full moon, and from there they would guide me within a safe distance of a rubber camp.

ONE day I was informed that a friendly call on a neighboring tribe was being contemplated and that I could accompany the Chief and his men. At last the day had arrived and the expedition was organized. I was not absolutely sure of how I would be treated by these up-stream Indians, and I am almost ashamed to say that in spite of the faithful, unswerving friendship which the Mangeromas had shown me, I had it in my mind that these other Indians might harm me, so black was the name popular report had given them.

I had until this time never used my gun, but before I started on this journey I decided to give them an example of its power and possibly awe them. Inviting the Chief and all the tribe to witness my experiment, I explained that this little weapon would make a great noise and bore a hole through a thick tree. The Chief examined the pistol gingerly, after I had locked the trigger. He had heard of such arms, he said, but thought that they were much larger and heavier. This one he thought must be a baby, and was inclined to doubt its power.

Selecting an assai palm of about nine inches diameter, I took a steady aim and fired four bullets. Three of the bullets went through the same hole and the fourth pierced the trunk of the palm about two inches higher. The Chief and the men hurried across the creek and examined the holes, causing them to discuss the affair for more than an hour. The empty shells which had been ejected were picked up by two young girls who fastened them in their ears with wire-like fibers, whereupon a dozen of other women surrounded me beseeching me to give them more cartridge-shells. I discharged more than a dozen bullets to please these children of the forest, who were as

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completely slaves of fashion as are their sisters of more civilized lands.

WIRELESS IN THE JUNGLE

EARLY next morning—this was in September, 1910—we started up the creek. In one canoe the Chief and I sat on jaguar-skins, while two men were paddling. In another were four men armed with bows and arrows and blow-guns, and a fifth who acted as a "Wireless Operator." The system of signaling which he employed was by far the most ingenious device I saw while in Brazil, and considering their resources and the state of civilization, it was more than remarkable.

Before the canoes were launched one of the men placed two upright forked sticks at each side of the canoe, about the middle. About three and a half feet astern of these a crosspiece was laid on the bottom of the craft. To this was fastened two short forked sticks. Between each pair of upright forked sticks was placed a crosspiece, thus forming two horizontal bars, parallel to each other, one only a few inches from the bottom and the other about a foot and a half above the gunwales. Next four slabs of caripari wood, of different thicknesses, about three feet long and eight inches wide, were suspended from these horizontal bars, so as to hang lengthwise of the canoe and at an angle of forty-five degrees. Each pair of slabs were separated through a longitudinal slit and were joined firmly at their extremities by finely carved and richly painted end-pieces.

The "Wireless Operator" strikes these slabs with a wooden mallet or hammer the head of which is wrapped with an inch layer of caoutchouc and then with a cover of tough tapir-skin. Each section of the wooden slabs gave forth a different note when struck, a penetrating, xylophonic sound which was devoid of the metallic disharmonic by-sounds of that instrument. The slabs of wood were, as mentioned, suspended by means of fiber-cords to the cross-pieces, and in this manner all absorption from the adjacent material was done away with.

By means of the many different combinations of the four notes *do-re-mi-fa*—the operator was able to send any message to any person who understood this code. The operator seized one mallet with each hand and gave the thickest section, the *do* slat, a blow, followed by a blow with the left hand on *re* slat, whereafter a blow on the *mi* slat and on the *fa* slat followed in rapid succession.

These four notes given in quick time and repeated several times represented the tuning up of the "Wireless," and was calculated to catch the attention of the operator up the creek. The sound was very powerful and rather pleasant, and made the still forest resound with a musical echo. He repeated this tuning process many times, but received no answer, and we proceeded again about a mile or so. Then we stopped again and signaled.

Then, very faintly, came a reply from some invisible source. I learned afterward that we were at least five miles from the answering station. As soon as communication was established, the first message was sent through the air and it was a moment of great suspense for me, as the powerful tones vibrated through the depths of the forest.

I will never forget this first message, not only because it was ethnographically interesting, but also because so much in my favor depended upon the favorable reply to it. I made the operator repeat it for my benefit when we later returned to our village and I learned it by heart by whistling it.

After each message the operator translated it. The meaning of this first one was: "A white man is arriving with us. He seems to have a good heart, and to be of a good character."

Whereupon the answer came clearly and quickly: "You are all welcome, provided you place your arms in the bottom of the canoe."

Next message: "We ask you to place your arms in your *maloca;* we are friends."

After this last message we paddled briskly ahead and, after an hour's journey, made a turn of the creek and saw a large space where probably five hundred Indians had assembled outside of two round *malocas*, constructed like ours.

How much did I regret that I had left my precious camera out in the forest, but that was now something of the past and the loss could not be repaired; the view that presented itself to my eyes was a splendid and rare one for civilized man to see. The crowd standing on the banks of the creek had never seen a white man before! How

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would they greet me—an unknown being?

Little dogs barked and large scarlet araras were screaming in the tree-tops near by, while the little naked children hid themselves behind their equally naked and bashful mothers. The tribe's Chief, a big fellow well decorated with the same ornamentations as our Chief, stood in the front with his arms crossed.

We landed and the operator dismantled his apparatus and laid it carefully in the bottom of the canoe. The two Chiefs embraced each other, at the same time uttering their welcome greeting: "He—He—He."

I was greeted in the same cordial manner and we all entered the Chief's *maloca* in a long procession. Here in the village of the brother tribe we stopped for two days, enjoying unlimited hospitality and kindness.

Space does not allow me to enter into the details connected with this pleasant sojourn, but it is enough to say that I regretted the moment when we turned our canoes homeward.

THE PERUVIANS ARE COMING!

A FEW days after our return to the old *maloca*, I was sitting outside the great hut writing my observations in the notebook I always carried in my hunting-coat, when two young hunters hurried toward the Chief, who was sitting in the shade of a banana-tree at the other end of the hut. It was early afternoon—the time when most of the men of the Mangeromas were hunting in the near-by forests, while their women and children attended to their various duties around the village. Probably not more than twenty men remained about the *maloca*.

I had now fully recovered from my previous attacks of fever, and was not entirely devoid of a desire for excitement. The explorer's best tonic is excitement, and life had been too quiet for me in the little village by the Branco River. The two young hunters with bows and arrows halted before the Chief. They were gesticulating wildly, and although I could not understand what they were talking about I judged from the frown of the Chief that something serious was the matter.

He rose with unusual agility for a man of his size and shouted something toward the opening of the *maloca*, where the men were soon seen coming out with great bounds and leaps. Anticipating trouble, I ran over to the Chief and inquired in my defective Mangeroma lingo the cause of the excitement. He did not answer me, but, in a greater state of agitation than I had previously observed, gave orders to his men.

He called the wireless operator and ordered him to bring out his precious "telegraph." This was soon fastened to the gunwales of the canoe, where I had seen it used before on my trip to the neighboring tribe, and soon the same powerful xylophonic sounds vibrated through the forest. It was his intention to summon his hunters, who were roaming around in the vicinity, by this C. Q. D. message.

The message I could not repeat, although it was not nearly so complex as the one I had learned before. After a while the men came streaming into the *maloca* from all directions, anxiety darkening their faces.

I had now my first inkling of what was the cause of the commotion, and it did not take me long to realize that we were in danger from the Peruvian *Caboclos*. The two young men who had given the message to the Chief had spied a detachment of Peruvian half-breeds. There were about fifty of them, all ugly *Caboclos*, or half-breed *caucheros*, hunting rubber and, no doubt, out for prey in the shape of young Mangeroma girls, as was their custom. The traps set by the Indians would now be of no avail, as the number of the Peruvians was far greater than any previously experienced.

The enemy had been observed more than ten miles off in an easterly direction, where our two hunters were on the trail of a large herd of peccaries or wild boars they had sighted in the early morning. The Peruvians were believed to be heading for the *maloca* of the Mangeromas, as there was no other settlement in this region excepting the up-creek tribe, which numbered over five hundred souls, and would be no easy match for the Peruvian invaders.

I had now a most remarkable opportunity to watch the preparations for war of these savage, cannibal people. Their army consisted of forty-five able-bodied men, all fine muscular fellows about five feet ten in height, and with an array of vicious looking weapons.

First of all were the club-men, armed with nothing but long slender clubs of the hard and extremely tough caripari wood. The handle, which was very slender, was

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provided with a knob at the end to prevent the club from slipping out of the hand when in action. The heavy end of the club was provided with six bicuspid teeth of the black jaguar, embedded in the wood and projecting about two inches beyond the surface. The club had a total length of five feet and weighed about eight pounds.

The second division of this wild looking army consisted of ten spearmen, all provided with three-pronged spears, a most terrible weapon which always proved fatal in the hands of these savages. A long straight handle of the caripari wood, about one inch in thickness, was divided into three parts at the end, and each of these ends again provided with points made of the barbed bone of the sting-ray fish. These three-and-a-half-inch bones were smeared with the *wourahli* poison, and thus rendered absolutely fatal when inflicting even a slight wound. Each man carried two spears, the points being covered with grass-sheaths when not in use.

The third division, composed of the youngest men in the tribe, among these boys of sixteen and seventeen, were the bow-and-arrow men. They were all armed with bows of great length, from six to seven feet, and each man carried a quiver at his left side containing a dozen big-game arrows fully five feet in length. These arrows were, as far as I could ascertain, not poisoned, but their shock and tearing power was truly remarkable. The arrow-heads were all made of the bones of the sting-ray, and were remarkably vicious weapons because of the many jagged barbs that could not be pulled out of the wound except by great force, thereby producing an ugly laceration.

The fourth and last division consisted of the blow-gun men, the most effective and cunning of this deadly and imposing array. As so much depended upon the success of a first attack on the Peruvians, who not only outnumbered us but also carried .44 Winchesters, the blow-guns were handled by the older and more experienced men of the tribe.

ALL the men, except the club-men, wore a girdle around the waist fringed with moutum plumes; the captains of each division added to their uniform a broad, multi-colored fringe of squirrel-tails. Their faces all had the usual scarlet and black stripes. The Chief and his principal aide, the sub-chief, had on their gayest feathers, including a head-gear of arara-parrot plumes and egret sprays. The club-men were absolutely naked except for their head-gear, which simply consisted of a ring of moutum feathers. When all the warriors stood in their costumes ready to start for the fight in the forest beyond, they presented a most awe-inspiring appearance.

The warriors all having assembled, the Chief gave the order for the bow-and-arrow men to start in single file, the others to fill in at the rear. In the meantime I had examined my Luger automatic pistol so as to make sure of the smooth action of the mechanism, and found besides that I had in all forty-seven soft-nosed bullets. This was my only weapon.

My previous narrow escapes from death and the many close contacts with imminent danger had hardened me, and I saw no danger where it really existed, so I was now willing to depend entirely upon my pistol.

The women and children of the *maloca* stood around us as we disappeared in the jungle and, while they had displayed some interest in the proceedings, they showed little or no emotion. A couple of sweethearts exchanged kisses as naturally as if they had been militia parting with the ladies of their choice before going to the annual maneuvers.

Soon we were in the dense dark jungle that I was so well acquainted with and, strange to say, the green and tangled mass of vegetation contained more terrors for me than the bloody combat that was to follow. We traveled in a straight line for an hour, pushing our way as noiselessly as possible through the dense tangle of creepers and lianas.

THE AMBUSH IN THE JUNGLE

AT THREE o'clock one of the scouts sighted the Peruvians, and our Chief decided then that an attack should be made as soon as possible, before darkness could set in. In these regions the sun always rises at six and sets at six. We stopped and sent out three club-men to reconnoiter. Here we spent an anxious half-hour before one of them returned with the news that the Peruvians were advancing toward us and

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would probably come upon us in less than fifteen minutes.

I could almost hear my heart thump, my knees grew weak, and for a moment I almost wished that I had remained in the *maloca*. But only for a moment, for soon the blood came surging through my veins and filled me with desire to go into action, to do something to relieve the terrible suspense. Immediately the Chief directed certain strategic movements which, under the conditions, were nothing short of marvelous in their foresight and keen knowledge. We were between two low hills covered with the usual dense vegetation which made it impossible to see any advancing enemy at a distance of more than five to ten yards. The blow-gun men were now ordered to ascend the hills on each side and conceal themselves about half-way up the slopes. They were to insert the poisoned arrows in the barrel of their guns and draw a bead on the Peruvians as they advanced, cutting their way through the underbrush.

The bow-and-arrow men posted themselves farther back, about five yards behind the blow-gun men, with their big-game arrows fitted to the bow-strings, ready to shoot when the first volley of the deadly and silent poisoned arrows had been fired. Further back were the spearmen, with their spears unsheathed. And last, the brave and ferocious club-men. Of these last warriors a tall athlete was visibly nervous, not from fear, but from anticipation. The veins on his forehead stood out, pulsating with every throb of his heart. He clutched the big, heavy club, and continually gritted his white, sharp-filed teeth in suspended rage.

It was thus wisely calculated that the enemies should wedge themselves into this valley-trap, and by the time they had realized their danger their return would be cut off by our bow-and-arrow men in the rear.

After a time that seemed an eternity to most of us, we heard the talking and the shouting of the Peruvians as they advanced toward us, following the natural and easiest route between the hills, and cutting their way through the brush. I stood near the Chief and the young club-man, Arara, who, on account of his bravery and ability in handling his great club, had been detailed to stand by us.

Before I could see any of the approaching enemy, I heard great shouts of anger and pain from the Peruvians. It was easy for me to understand their cries as they all spoke Spanish, a language which the Mangeromas did not understand, and their cursings, sounded loud through the forest.

What had happened? The blow-gun men, seeing the Peruvians at the foot of the hill only some twenty feet away, had prudently waited until at least a dozen of the enemy were plainly visible; then they fired a volley of poisoned darts. Eleven arrows out of the twelve that were fired in the first volley hit their mark. Hardly had this volley been discharged when they inserted other arrows in their barrels. Their work was now restricted to the picking out of any stray enemy—their long, delicate and somewhat cumbersome blow-guns disabling them from taking an active part in the mêlée.

THE SLAUGHTER OF THE PERUVIANS

NOW the conflict was at its height, and it was remarkably swift and effective. So sudden was the rush of the bow-and-arrow men, reinforced by the spearmen, that for some time no rifles could be discharged by the Peruvians. The attack had been so sudden that the invaders had been panic-stricken. They had not expected to meet any preliminary defense from the Mangeromas, whom they had intended to take by surprise after dark, and now they saw these painted, yelling devils descend upon them with great ferocity and swiftness.

The bow-and-arrow men, charging with their sting-ray arrows, took the place of the prudently retreating blow-gun men. At the same instant the spearmen rushed upon the enemy, breaking through the underbrush at the foot of the hill like breakers on a stormy sea.

The rear guard of the Peruvians now went into action, having had more chance to view the situation. Some ten of them broke off to the right and managed to fire their large .44 lead bullets into the backs of the bow-and-arrow men, but they were in their turn picked out by other blow-gun men who kept firing their guns from a safe distance, where they kept dodging in and out among the trees.

The fearful yells of our men, mingling with the cursing of the Peruvians and the sharp reports of their heavily loaded rifles, deafened me, and proved that they were not many yards off. Now the club-men broke into action; they could not be kept back any

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longer—the tension had already been too great and long-lasting for these brave fellows. With great war-cries of "*Yob-he-he*," they launched themselves where the mêlée was thickest, swinging their great clubs over their heads and crushing skulls from right to left. By this time the Peruvians had lost many men.

But the slaughtering went on—the great, black clubs of the Mangeromas came down with sickening thuds, piercing and crushing the heads of the Peruvians. Suddenly four of the enemy came into view not more than twelve feet from where the Chief, Arara the big club-man and I were standing. One of these men was a Spaniard, evidently the captain of this expedition of marauders or, as their offlcial name was, "caucheros" or rubber-hunters. His face was of a sickly yellow color, and a big, black mustache hid the lower part of his cruel, narrow face. He took a quick aim as he saw us in front of him, but before he could pull the trigger Arara, with a mighty side-swing of his great club, literally tore the Spaniard's head off.

NOW, as the last bonds of restraint were broken, this handsome devil Arara, yelling himself hoarse, and with his strong but cruel face contracted to a fiendish grin, charged in on the men and I saw him crush the life out of three.

The Chief took no active part in the fight whatever, but added to the excitement by bellowing with all his might an encouraging "*Aa-oo-ah.*" This had a very beneficial effect upon the men of the tribe, for they never ceased fighting until the last Peruvian was killed. During the last minutes of the fight several bullets whirred by me at close range, but up to that time I had not had the opportunity or necessity of using my automatic pistol until a *Caboclo* with a large bloody machete in his hand sprang from behind a tree and made straight for me. I dodged behind a tree and saw the branches being swept aside as he rushed toward me.

I sent three bullets point blank at him and he fell on his face at my feet and moved no more. As I bent over him I saw that he had a small blow-gun arrow in his left thigh; he had been a doomed man when he attacked me, the action of the *wourahli*, however, not having set in before he came for me. This was my first and only victim during this brief and horrible fight.

As I was already thoroughly sick from the noise of cracking rifles and the thumping sound of the clubs as they picked their way into the brains of the Peruvians, I rushed toward the center of the valley where the first attack on the advance-guard of the enemy had taken place, but even more revolting was the sight that here revealed itself to me.

Here and there the bushes were moving as some *Caboclo* crawled on all fours in death agony. Those who were struck by the blow-gun arrows simply seemed to fall asleep without much pain or struggle, but the victims of the club-men, the bow-men and the arrow-men had a terrible death. They could not enjoy the merciful death of the *wourahli* poisoned men, but died from the hemorrhages caused by the injuries of other weapons. One poor fellow was groaning most pitifully. He had received a well-directed big-game arrow in the upper part of his abdomen, the arrow being shot with such terrible force that about a foot of the shaft projected from the back, the arrow-head having broken off in striking a vertebra.

54 minus 54 = 0

THE battle was over, and soon the *urubus* or vultures were hanging over the tree-tops waiting for their share of the fight. The men assembled in front of the Chief for roll-call. Seven of our men were killed outright by rifle-bullets, but none of these brave men were killed from machete stabs. The entire marauding expedition was completely wiped out, fifty-four, all told. None escaped, and thus the danger was avoided of being attacked by a greater additional force of Peruvians, called to this place from the distant Peruvian frontier by returned survivors.

It is true that the Mangeromas lay in ambush for the Peruvians and killed them, for the greater part with poisoned arrows, but the odds were against the Indians, not only because the Peruvians were attacking them in greater numbers, but because they came with their modern repeating fire-arms against the hand-weapons of the Mangeromas. These Peruvians came with murder and girl-robbery in their black hearts, while the Mangeromas defended their homes and families. But it is true, also, that after the battle so bravely fought the Indians cut off the hands and feet of the enemies, dead or dying.

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THE CANNIBAL FEAST

IT WAS after sunset when we returned to the *maloca*. The fight lasted only some twenty minutes. The women and children received us with great demonstrations of joy. Soon the pots and pans were boiling inside the great hut. I had previously observed how the Mangeromas would partake of parts of the human body as a sort of religious rite whenever they had caught somebody in their traps, but now they feasted upon the hands and feet of the slain, after having distributed these parts among the families of the tribe.

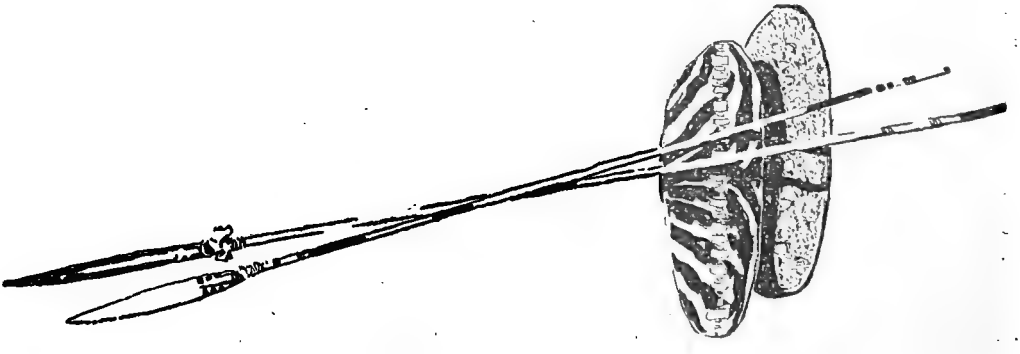
I crept up in my hammock and lit my pipe, watching the great mass of naked humanity moving around the many fires on the floor of the hut. Here some men were sitting in groups discussing the battle, while there the women bent over the pots to examine the ghastly contents. Here another woman was engaged in stripping the flesh off the palm of a hand and the sole of a foot, whereupon she threw both in a large earthen pot to boil; there some women were applying a poultice to their husbands' wounds. And over it all hung a thick, odoriferous smoke, gradually finding its way out through the central opening in the roof.

It was a feast, indeed, such as few have witnessed. That night and the next day, and the following four days, great quantities of *chicha* was drunk and much meat was consumed to celebrate the great victory, the greatest in the annals of the Mangeromas.

IT WAS a rainy morning two weeks after this event that I wrapped up my few belongings and stowed them in the pockets of my hunting-suit, because the moment had come when I was to depart from these dear friends and turn my face toward the States once again. I embraced and was in turn embraced by everybody in the *maloca*, and went down to the canoe that was to carry me down the creek, to the River Branco and from there to a place where I would be within walking distance of some rubber-camp. The Chief embraced me cordially once more, and bade me a farewell that made me feel very sad and miserable. I had lived here for more than six weeks, among strange people who had saved my life and treated me as a semi-god, and now I was to face the hardships of jungle travel again.

The dogs barked and the parrots screamed in the tree-tops, and I was off. The journey from the Indian *maloca* was devoid of any incidents. We followed the course of the creek to the Branco River, and eventually the Indians in their canoe let me off at a place from where I could hear the roosters crowing in the camp of a rubber estate.

I arrived at this camp late in the afternoon and secured passage down to the Floresta headquarters, from where we had started our fatal trip. The Colonel had given me up as lost long ago, and greeted me cordially. I reported to him the sad end of the two men, the chief and Jerome. Here I waited for the launch and succeeded in arriving at Remate de Males before the rainy season began. From there I descended the Javary to the Amazon and was finally picked up by the steamship *Napo* from Iquitos in Peru. We sailed down the mighty river to its mouth—a distance of some twenty-three hundred miles—and thence north to New York.



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When the Secret Service Failed

By Stephen Allen Reynolds.

"THEN you are really in earnest when you claim that you have better men in your Division of Investigation than I have in the Secret Service?" The Secretary frowned as he put the question, slightly nettled at the Attorney-General's warm praise of his newly organized Bureau.

The head of the Department of Justice leaned back in his comfortable chair and nodded affirmatively.

"And your reason?"

"We pay higher salaries," was the prompt reply. "You break in your Secret Service men at four dollars a day, and they have to spend the better part of their lives in the service before they get the top salary of eight. On the other hand, my D. I. men start in at five a day. If their record shows that they are worthy, their salaries may be doubled within sixty days. We pay according to results. Why—I have one man earning six thousand a year, who's only been in the Bureau since its organization two years ago. The high salaries attract the best class of operatives and investigators. The question is simply one of dollars and cents."

"But my men are not mercenary," objected the Secretary. "There's not an operative in the Department who wouldn't cheerfully risk his life while on a case. I'd pay them more, but Congress has me tied up; the Secret Service fund seems to grow smaller and smaller every year."

"There's only one way in which to demonstrate the superiority of my men over yours," declared the Attorney-General, as he attacked a stack of expense vouchers before him. Automatically affixing his signature to the topmost document, he continued to write and speak.

"You must have some unsolved mysteries in your Department," he went on. "Cases which have been given up by your men."

"The Secret Service never gives up," muttered the Secretary grimly.

"Well, take for instance some case which has been hanging on unduly. Suppose I lend you a man that will show you results?"

The Secretary pulled at his gray beard for some moments, lost in thought. Unsolved mysteries were rare in the Treasury Department.

"There's a little matter right here in Washington. We might make a test case out of it," he declared finally. "I have three employees in my Department who, I am sorry to say, are most unquestionably thieves of the smoothest character. Two of them are men. The other is a woman who has been employed by the Government for nearly ten years."

"How do you know that they are thieves?" interrupted the other, looking up from his papers.

"Simply from the fact that they each seem to be supplied with an apparently unlimited amount of money, and are habitually spending approximately ten times the amount of their respective salaries. As you probably know, from time to time we use Secret Service men to shadow Treasury Department employees after business hours.

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These operatives report the result of each investigation to their chief.

"The following points are covered: The salary of the employee; personal habits after business hours; intimates and associates; whether or not a frequenter of the race-track, pool-rooms, or gambling resorts; private financial means aside from the Government salary; and, most important of all, whether or not the person under investigation is living within his or her means.

"As you probably know, there are nearly six thousand men and women employed by the Treasury Department in Washington alone; and even after eliminating the clerks and laborers who handle neither money nor postage stamps, the task of investigating the others has been a big proposition. The men have done their work well this year, and we've unearthed a few little dishonest schemes and punished the guilty ones; but now, after all these months of labor, it seems that we have these three thieves on our hands against whom we can prove nothing.

"We have missed nothing from the divisions where these persons are employed, but we know that something is wrong. I've had two of my best men on those cases for the last four months; but, so far, they haven't been able to determine where the three prodigals get their money."

"I'll lend you a man for a week," declared the Attorney-General.

He laid aside his pen and consulted a typewritten schedule which lay at his elbow. Running his eye down a column of data, he finally pressed a push-button before him.

A few seconds later, a grave-looking individual pushed aside the swinging doors of padded leather and gazed inquiringly at his superior.

"Willard is due from New York this evening, isn't he?" inquired the Attorney-General.

"Yes, sir; at five-fifteen."

"Very well. Have him instructed to drop the Lumber Trust matter for a few days. To-morrow morning he will report in person to the Secretary of the Treasury for instructions. Carry him upon your reports as being on detached service until further orders."

"Very good, sir," was the reply of the Bureau chief, as he turned upon his heel and left the room.

"Now, my dear Mr. Secretary," began the Attorney-General, as the doors closed noiselessly behind his subordinate, "I'm not a betting man; furthermore, there's a law against it; but if my man Willard doesn't clean up those mysteries to your satisfaction within one week, I'll buy you a box at the New National for the remainder of the season."

"And if he does succeed within that space of time, I'll stand you a thousand of the best cigars that the Metropolitan has on hand."

So saying, the Secretary reached for his silk hat and turned to leave.

"You may as well order the cigars now," laughed the Attorney-General, as he shook hands; "Corinda perfectos always suited me pretty well."

"We'll see," was the rejoinder, as the gray-haired Cabinet official shook his head doubtfully.

Turning toward the outer office, he left the Attorney-General alone with his vouchers.

II

PROMPTLY at ten o'clock upon the morning of the day following, a round-shouldered, smoothly shaven man of thirty-five or forty approached the anteroom which gave access to the private office of the Secretary of the Treasury.

"Ah don't think the Secretary's seein' anybody this mornin'," said the negro door-tender doubtfully, as he fingered the card handed to him.

"S'pose you take the card in and see what he says about that," suggested the visitor, as he removed his shell-rimmed spectacles and wiped them carefully.

The negro disappeared, but was back in an instant.

"The Secretary says for you to go right in, sah," he said, with an obsequious bow.

The Secretary glanced curiously at his visitor, and then, picking up a batch of typewritten reports, plunged abruptly into the matter at issue.

"I have three persons in my Department, Mr. Willard, who spend much more money than they earn. Your task will be to ascertain where this money comes from. Two of my Secret Service men have been working on the cases for some months without tangible results. I have had them called off this morning, and, from now on, you will take full charge of these particular cases.

"Take first the case of Edward Walters," the Secretary continued, referring to one of

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the documents in his hand. "He's employed as laborer in the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Notwithstanding the fact that he earns a little less than two dollars a day, has no bank-account or other source of legitimate income, he is paying fifty dollars a month for a furnished apartment in the northwestern quarter of the city.

"This report shows that he lives there in an expensive way, and that apart from his household expenses he spends an amount averaging four dollars a day on liquors and cigars. He invariably pays his bills with worn currency, and has never been known to exhibit any new bills save when he received them in his pay-envelope. He is employed in the Stamp-printing Division as a sweeper and cleaner, and has been searched six times as he was leaving the building, but without results.

"Secondly, there's the case of John Fogarty, an unmarried plate-printer. He's employed upon a piece-work basis, and earns about seven dollars a day. The reports show that he has no income aside from his earnings, yet he lives at a hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue, where his bills for room, meals, wine and cigars average seventy dollars weekly. Furthermore, he frequents a billiard-room nearly every night and plays pool for money. As it happens, he's a very poor player, and nights when he doesn't lose ten or fifteen dollars are exceptional.

"Most serious of all is the third case, that of Miss Carolyn Ford. She started work in this Department as a binder's assistant about nine years ago. Her first salary was eight dollars a week. Since that humble beginning she has worked her way up to a yearly salary of twelve hundred dollars. She's now, and has been for several years, employed in the Redemption Division in this building as an expert counter of old money sent in for redemption. The records and reports show that she came of poor parents, both of whom have died since she entered the employ of the Government.

"She has always lived up to her salary; and taking into consideration her mode of living, her dress, tri-weekly visits to first-class theaters and other incidental expenses, it must have been a sheer impossibility for her to have saved any considerable sum of money. Notwithstanding that fact, it is a matter of record that she purchased an estate in Maryland last January, for which she paid twelve thousand in cash. She's also been depositing money in a Baltimore bank at the rate of six hundred a week ever since she purchased the Maryland property. We've not been able to locate the bank where she hoarded her money before that; but it's not certain that she used a bank.

"Her duties are to verify the contents of the packages of worn and mutilated currency which the banks send in for redemption. These packages of money are counted five times before they go under the knife and into the macerator, twice before they reach her and twice afterward. She has never been found short, and she's the despair of the entire Secret Service.

"She makes her Baltimore deposits by registered mail, and we've learned that the amount is invariably in new bills of various denominations. She's been through the hands of a trusted female searcher upon several occasions, but she doesn't know that she's under suspicion, and for that matter, neither do the two suspects at the Bureau of Engraving.

"Now, Mr. Willard, you will try to learn where and by what means these persons obtain their extra money, and communicate with me. I want facts which will justify warrants of arrest. You may take all this data along with you; and I warn you before you start in that you have a hard task before you, and that you'll have nothing to be ashamed of in case you fail."

AS THE head of the Treasury Department finished speaking, he folded up the documents, snapped a rubber band around them, and extended them to the investigator.

"Just a moment, Mr. Secretary," began Willard, as he pocketed the folded sheets without so much as glancing at them; "we'll not speak of failure just yet, but we'll cross our bridges one at a time—after we get to 'em. Before I leave you, I've a question or two to ask you."

"Very well, but please be as brief as possible, for I'm due at a Cabinet meeting in ten minutes."

"How do you reconcile your statement that none of these suspects are aware of the fact that they're being watched with your statement that they've all been subjected to a search? Doubtless there's a simple explanation."

"We have invariably announced that a

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certain sheet of money or package of currency is missing, and that it has been traced to a certain division. We have then compelled each worker in that Division to submit to a search at the hands of skilful and trusted male and female operatives of the Secret Service. Without letting our suspects know that particular attention was being paid to them, and that the search was instituted for their especial benefit, we have searched them without warning as they left their respective places of employment after the day's work.

"The next day, in order to quiet matters, information would be given out that the missing money had been found in some out-of-the-way corner by the chief of the Division after all the workers had left the building. But these searchings must cease. I can't permit it, for it's breeding bad feeling among the employees. The next time a search is made, there must be excellent reasons for it."

"The two men are not permitted to leave the Bureau of Engraving during the day?"

"That's an iron-clad rule," affirmed the Secretary. "No employee of the Bureau is permitted to leave the building until the time comes for closing, or at least, until the night shift comes on. They are supposed to carry their lunches with them. Only by means of a pass from the director, or by reason of an accident or sudden illness, may an employee be passed out of the Bureau. The 'day money,' partly printed and otherwise, must be counted, tallied, and in the vaults before the bell rings permitting the day force to leave the premises, and the same applies to the men and women of the night shift."

"No doubt the same rule applies to the Redemption Division in this building, where the woman is working?"

"The regulations are even more strict here than at the Bureau. She works in a room with nine other persons. No one is permitted to enter or leave that room during working hours without my personal pass. The money must be tallied and placed in the vault before the employees themselves are allowed to leave. As for the room itself, it's to all intents and purposes a huge wire cage. An old negro messenger, who has been in the service ever since the war, pushes around a box on wheels from this room to another one. He hauls the unverified packages from the express division to the room where Miss Ford works, and from thence, after the amount and denominations have been tallied, to the vault, the cutter, or the macerator, according to the directions of the Committee of Destruction."

"No doubt you have every confidence in this negro?" assumed the man from the Department of Justice.

"I'd stake my life that old Sam has nothing to do with the crooked work," declared the Secretary. "He was born in slavery. His owner, Senator Maltby, set him free; and even to this day the Senator sends Sam his Christmas gift. You'll have to look elsewhere for the woman's accomplice, in case she has one."

"Well, I don't think I'll have to trouble you any more until I give you memoranda to justify warrants of arrest."

Willard rose from his chair. Producing a visiting-card, he scribbled something upon it and extended it to the Secretary.

"I'll want a card to the director at the Bureau, giving me a free hand," he went on. "I wish you'd mail it to this address tonight. When I wind up the Bureau cases I'll want to prowl around the Treasury Building for a half a day or so."

"I'll mail you a letter of authority this afternoon," the Secretary said, as he placed a paper-weight upon the card, and then glanced at the clock, mindful of the Friday meeting of the Cabinet.

III

PERCHING himself upon a pile of sacks full of dextrin, Willard produced a gimlet and lost no time in boring a peep-hole through the wooden partition separating the stamp-printing room from the gum storeroom. The hole completed to his satisfaction, he adjusted some of the sacks to a more comfortable angle, and began his observation.

Just below him, three automatic stamp-printing machines were grinding out sheets of the two and five cent variety, each attended by a man and two girls. Stalwart laborers moved about, hauling hand-trucks piled high with paper. Other men were occupied in removing the freshly printed sheets to the driers at the farther end of the room. To the right, Willard's peep-hole commanded a view of the automatic gumming-machines and perforators.

Walters, the suspected laborer, a middle-

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aged man, clad in overalls and jumper, moved around the room with his broom. Methodically sweeping aisle after aisle between the rows of machines, he occasionally paused to shovel the litter into a sack.

From eleven o'clock until the whistle sounded the hour of noon, Willard remained motionless, with his eye at the hole. As the suspect left the room, the investigator straightened up for a moment and rubbed the cramped muscles of his neck. He then again applied his eye to the peep-hole just in time to see the laborer reënter the room bearing two cans of milk. He was quickly surrounded by a group of printers holding tin-cups and glasses. After serving the milk, Walters retired to a corner of the room, where he seated himself upon a bench and proceeded to eat his lunch.

For half an hour Willard's eye never left his man, but as the big whistle sounded again, indicating that the half-hour for lunch was over, he left the building after displaying a card to the watchman at the main entrance. His first move was to light a cigar; his second, to enter a near-by saloon and telephone for a taxicab.

"I want you to wait right here until a milk-wagon comes out of the Bureau yard," Willard instructed the chauffeur before seating himself in the vehicle. "You will then follow the wagon, driving very slowly, and keeping at least a block in the rear of it."

Fifteen or twenty minutes elapsed before the milk-wagon appeared. Slowly, the taxicab took up the pursuit and followed it from place to place. Finally it drew up before a cigar factory, and its red-headed driver entered the building, carrying a tray of pint bottles in one hand and a milk-can in the other. Pausing long enough to make a note of the name on the sign which hung over the cigar establishment, the detective ordered the chauffeur to make all haste back to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing.

"TELL me what you know about this man Fogarty," directed Willard, as he stood upon the floor of the big money-printing room with the chief of the Division.

"I don't know what to make of Jack," returned the chief, scratching his head. "He's working over there at the corner press on twenty-dollar gold faces."

Willard glanced in the direction indicated. Under a partly opened window near by, a grimy plate-printer was tugging at the handles of his press. His female assistant stood by him, a fresh sheet of dampened paper in her hand.

"The Secret Service men say that Jack's crooked," went on the chief; "but I don't see how it's possible. Every sheet of paper is counted out to him in the morning, and he has to account for every scrap of it at night. Then again, there's a locked dial on every plate-press in this room which indicates the total number of impressions. Those registers are placed on the presses in order to prevent any of the men from running a sheet of bond paper through the machine surreptitiously.

"Jack is one of the best men I have. He was on night work, printing backs, until a year ago. He may booze a bit on the outside, but he's straight as a die inside here, and wastes very little paper. The Secret Service men have changed his assistant several times, and have even put two of their female workers at feeding the press for him. I've changed the lock on his press at least a dozen times without his knowledge; but there's been nothing doing, and if he spends more than he earns, he must have been buying stocks on a margin and beating the game."

"Is it customary to have the windows open at this time of the year?" Willard asked.

"Well—yes," hesitated the chief. "Some of these men work near the steam radiators, and when there's a full head of steam on, they find it too hot for them. Their work is very strenuous, as you see."

"What do you mean by stating that he wastes very little paper?" asked Willard, abruptly changing the subject after a rapid survey of the arrangement of steam radiators.

"You see, every sheet of paper counted out to these printers costs the Government in the neighborhood of two cents. Each sheet takes an impression of four bills. The backs are generally printed by the night shift; that work isn't so particular as the faces, which carry the portraits. Now, if a press-feeder lays a sheet on crooked, or if it gets soiled with ink or torn, it has to be accounted for and turned in just the same as the perfect printed sheets. This soiled, torn, and partly printed paper is kept until the end of the month. The number of the

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printer is noted on the corner of each spoiled sheet, and his waste kept together.

"We keep a record of each man's percentage of waste paper, and if the percentage gets too high, we either caution the man or dismiss him. If a sheet of paper is missing, we take the face value of it out of the printer's wages, according to what the denomination of the plate is that he's working with. Jack Fogarty's percentage is well below the average waste, and he's never lost a sheet of paper."

Willard thought deeply for a few minutes, with never another glance in the direction of the spot where the suspected plate-printer was at work.

"I'd like to see his spoiled paper for the past month," he finally said.

Following the chief to one of the smaller vaults, he waited while his conductor went over several hundred rolls of inky and torn paper. Some of them were rubbed and smeared with the green ink used in the making of dollar bills; others were soiled with the golden-brown ink used for gold certificates.

Selecting a small roll of spoiled sheets, the chief handed it to Willard. The latter not only carefully inspected each sheet in turn, but asked the other to unroll for his inspection a bundle of sheets spoiled by one of the other plate-printers.

Looking them over with care, Willard at last pronounced his satisfaction, and drew out his watch.

"Gracious!" he exclaimed. "It's nearly two o'clock, and I've got to have lunch before I tackle another little problem."

IV

"NOT a soul can come in dat room but me," stated the negro messenger at the door of a room in the Redemption Division. He wagged his woolly gray head emphatically.

"Not even a milkman, laundryman, restaurant-waiter, or telegraph-messenger?" asked Willard, pocketing a card of identification which had caused the darkey's eyes to open wider.

"No indeed, sah; only me and Mistah Secretary hisself."

"Now, take the ladies who work in that room, for instance; don't any of them ever give you a can or bottle to fetch coffee or tea in?"

The negro shook his head.

"I don't want to go in the room, but I want to know about the windows. Do any of 'em face the outside of the building?"

"De only windows are high up on de inside, and dey're all covered with wiah nettin'."

"Does Miss Ford ever ask you any favors? Do you ever fetch or carry anything for her?"

"Nothin' but to mail her letters for her. She done write to her folks most every noon after she eat her lunch, and I mail 'em."

"To whom are they addressed?" asked Willard.

"I couldn't say dat, boss, for I can't read; but I got a lettah in my pocket now dat I won't have a chance to mail before my next trip to de express-room."

Willard held out his hand. The negro felt in his pocket and produced a letter, sealed, stamped and plainly addressed. Willard glanced at it, and then, to the surprise of the messenger, he coolly placed it in his pocket.

"I'll take charge of this letter and mail it for you," said he. "And don't you dare to say a word about it to Miss Ford or anybody else. You've seen my card. It's the wishes of the Secretary himself."

Leaving the puzzled negro behind, Willard took the elevator to the first floor of the Treasury Building, and a few moments later was seated in the private office of the Secretary.

"You may secure warrants of arrest for the following named and described persons at once," began Willard. "Apprehend Edward Walters, the laborer; a red-headed driver for Holme's Dairy—I'll get his name over the 'phone in a few minutes; Hirsch Mendel, manufacturer of cigars; and John Fogarty, plate-printer. Jail each one separately Monday morning, and tell the first three that each of the others have confessed."

"But the grounds, Mr. Willard? What were the schemes?" The Secretary was taken by storm, astonished and surprised by the quick result of the investigation, barely twenty-four hours old.

"I saw Walters knock over a pile of printed sheets of internal revenue cigar-stamps," replied Willard. "He picked them up, all but one sheet. That sheet, he crumpled up and then placed it in an empty milk-can. The red-headed driver of the milk-

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wagon is acting as a go-between, and Mendel is, without question, buying the stolen stamps. Get a search-warrant for the cigar establishment, and time the arrests so that they'll be made simultaneously.

"In watching the postage stamps and printed money so carefully, your people at the Bureau evidently forget that internal revenue stamps are also valuable, even though they are printed upon a cheap grade of paper and can only be used by manufacturers. A strict account should be kept of such stamps hereafter, and dials should be placed upon the stamp-presses, so that the total number of impressions daily can be compared with the finished work.

"Monday morning, when he enters the Bureau, Fogarty, the plate-printer, should be served with the warrant, and then searched. You will most likely find a sheet of bond paper upon his person, already printed upon one side with the back patterns. His scheme is to take the heavy plate which he is now working, and place it, well-inked, upon the top sheet of his pile of genuine paper. In all probability he sits upon the plate while he eats his lunch, while his assistant is in the women's lunchroom.

"Before she returns, he has plenty of time to replace the plate upon the inking-stand, and then smudge the rough impression upon the genuine paper in such a manner that it appears to have been run through the press with a lightly inked plate. In this manner, he is one impression ahead of the dial register; and it takes him but a few moments to complete the partly printed sheet that he smuggled in. He probably throws his luncheon wrapper out of the open window at his elbow; and within that lies the crumpled sheet of twenty-dollar bills.

"He picks this up as he passes through the yard; and if he's been working the scheme every day, he must have a small fortune hidden away somewhere. A genuine impression upon good bond paper, even without the silk fiber and Treasury seal, will pass most anywhere. I suppose that he smudges a few of them while pocketing the damp impressions; but even so, it's a clever trick."

"WILLARD, you're a wonder!" gasped the Secretary. "I'll call a stenographer and make a note of this data for the warrants. But when do you expect to start in with the Ford woman?"

"I don't think that I'll have to start," returned Willard, as he produced a letter from his pocket. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, this letter will solve the mystery connected with her spending money. Will you assume the responsibility of opening it?"

"Why! it's addressed to her!" exclaimed the Secretary, as he cast his eyes over the superscription and saw that the letter was addressed to:

Miss Carolyn Ford,
2844 B Street, N. W.,
Washington, D. C.

Slitting open the end of the envelope with the blade of a penknife, the Secretary withdrew its contents. Inside of a folded sheet of note-paper were a well-worn hundred dollar bank-note and a score or so of fragments of other notes.

"That letter was handed to the negro messenger by Miss Ford herself about one o'clock to-day," explained Willard.

"But I don't understand it!" the Secretary exclaimed. "Her count is invariably correct, and she has a quadruple check on her."

Willard rapidly counted the fragments. There were twenty of them in all. Most of the pieces showed that they had been torn from a hundred-dollar bill.

"The money which Miss Ford counts is all soiled, worn and otherwise mutilated, is it not?" asked the detective, while he busied himself arranging the fragments in the form of a rectangle.

"Correct," affirmed the Secretary.

"Very well. Now if she has torn a small piece from certain sections of hundred-dollar notes, it would, I believe, be quite feasible for her to trim the pieces in such a manner that they would form a whole note. That is, allowing that the notes are of the same series and pattern."

"Quite so," agreed the Secretary as he began to see a great light.

"Suppose that in the privacy of her own room at her boarding-house she trimmed these pieces and pasted a piece of transparent tissue over them, what is to prevent her from taking it with her into the Redemption Division, and, watching her chance, abstract a worn hundred-dollar note and substitute the pieced bill? The pieced bill sooner or later goes under the knife and into the mac-

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erator, and the evidence is thus destroyed.

"My lady cares not a whit for searchers. She changes her hundred-dollar bills most anywhere in town, and then deposits the exchanged bills by mail in Baltimore. It's a pretty scheme; and that's just what she's been doing for some time. Get a warrant for her also; but be sure to have it served when she reports for work Monday morning so that she can be searched for the patched bank-note."

"No wonder that she bought a twelve-thousand-dollar estate!" mused the Secretary, as he gazed at the fragments upon his desk.

"If she'd kept on for a few years she might have built a palace on Dupont Circle," observed Willard. "And now, Mr. Secretary," he went on to request, "if you can spare me, I'd like to spend Sunday with my wife and family. You won't need me any more on these cases, and I never make arrests in person. You can wind up the affair with your Secret Service men; and with your permission I'll report back to the Department of Justice on Monday."

"You have my consent, Willard; and permit me to say that the Attorney-General ought to be proud of you."

"You'll have to ask him about that, sir," was the laughing reply, as Willard bowed himself out.

UPON the Monday following, shortly before the hour of noon, the Chief of the Secret Service left the Secretary's office after a somewhat lengthy conference with his superior. The door had scarcely closed behind him before the Secretary was in telephonic communication with the Department of Justice.

"Nothing important," he murmured into the transmitter; "I just called you up to let you know that it looks as if those cigars are on me."

And they were.

The Preacher and the Gun-Man

by Hapsburg Liebe *

REPORT that the miners at Yellow Creek were finding much gold had resulted in a rush from neighboring towns for the supposed Eldorado. Eleazer Mott, an old plainsman, was reaping a rich harvest by hauling passengers in an antiquated stage coach from the railroad, a distance of ten miles.

The train had just pulled out, and the old coach was crowded. One man found it necessary to sit beside the driver, who was no other than old Eleazer himself.

When all was ready, a long whip cracked over the heads of the wheel horses, Mott's harsh voice rang out, and the start was made. As they rattled along over the stones, between hills lined with sage and scrub, the man beside old Eleazer turned abruptly.

"Is Yellow Creek a healthful place?" he

*See page 412.

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asked with a stranger's usual curiosity.

Mott chuckled, cracked his long whip again and answered,

"It's healthy for most people, stranger. There's a few exceptions, and not the least of these is hoss-doctors, preachers and gunmen."

"I can lay no claim to any of those distinctions," laughed the other, "but I should like to hear the story." For he knew there was a story.

And there was. Here it is, straight from the lips of old Eleazer Mott himself:

AS FOR the hoss-doctor, he stole a hoss or two. Enough said in this connection. There's a little more to tell about the other distinctions, as you called them.

Last year, along in the Spring, I took along with me to Yellow Creek a slim, pale-lookin' man dressed in solid black. He carried a big leather-bound book under his arm and wore one o' them go-to-Hades hightop hats. Just after he'd 'lighted in Yellow Creek, he turned to me and says,

"I'm Elliot Barker. I'm a minister of the gospel. I want your influence; I want you to come to meetin' when I get a place to preach. And, by the way, do you happen to know where I can find a house that I can put to use as a church?"

"My name's Eleazer Mott. I'm an explainsman, and now a driver of a stage coach," I told him in return for his confidences. "There's an empty cabin belongin' to me at the upper end o' town; and there's another empty cabin, also belongin' to me, standin' half a mile above town on the hillside. You can use them until I need them."

He seemed to brighten up at that.

"I'm much obliged," he says. "I'll use the town cabin for a church, and live in the hillside cabin. Is there very much wickedness goin' on in Yellow Creek?"

"No," I says, "there ain't. Any new minin' town is a saintly place, of course."

But he seemed to be such a good sort of a man that I melted a little. I didn't like to see him look hurt that way.

"Yes, preacher," I acknowledged, "there's enough wickedness right here in Yellow Creek to send a whole planet to Hades a-scootin'. The Red Violet Saloon is the start of it, of course. But, preacher," I went on to say, "the meanness is not low down; it's open and aboveboard, and it'll take open and aboveboard methods to work a reformation."

"Then you'll come to hear me preach?" he wanted to know, lookin' up soft and tender like.

"Sure thing, old hoss!" I told him, and I really meant to help him out.

"I feel," says Barker, reachin' his hand up to me, "that I can truly call you my brother. Shake with me, Brother Mott."

I did. Sure enough, he knowed how to shake hands. That's a thing lots o' men couldn't do to save their lives, is to shake hands right. Barker sure could do it.

"If you need any ready money," I told him, "I've got it to loan you."

He smiled at that.

"I need a little right now," he says. "I'd be glad to have about twenty dollars, if it won't inconvenience you, Brother Mott."

So I let him have the money. He thanked me with a spine-crackin' bow, and shook hands again. Then he turned with his luggage to Sol Kibler's hotel.

The town, if you've never been there, is a stragglin' sort of a place. It lines both sides of the creek and reaches about half a mile. Above it is a range o' scrub-covered hills; below it is a kind of a rocky plain and then the desert. In the middle of it is the Red Violet Saloon, the hotel and a few stores.

The preacher had got there just in good time for dinner. Sol let him have a room in the up-stairs of his establishment until he could find a little furniture for the cabin out in the scrub.

AT FIRST the miners made a good deal o' fun of Barker and his quiet, sanctified ways. But he'd go out among them and talk with them and not appear to see that they had forty-fives hangin' to their hips—some of them two. After a while, however, some o' the miners kind o' took to Barker, and he got a pretty fair congregation the fourth Sunday he preached in the little log cabin church. His pulpit was an empty flour-barrel, and the people sat on boxes, logs, rocks and the like.

Well, when the fourth Sunday of preachin' in Yellow Creek had come and gone, on Monday night there blowed into the Red Violet a tall, rawboned fellow with long black hair, mustaches and beard, and a

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badly browned hide. He wore a wide dove-colored sombrero, a blue flannel shirt, and high boots, and carried two fine guns—both forty-fives—and two belts full o' cartridges.

He walks in like he owns the earth and a few planets throwed in for good measure, and bangs the butt of his right hand gun on the bar. Jim Elversett was the proprietor and bartender. He turns with a frown and a hand ready to pull his own forty-five.

"Aw, never mind callin' out the artillery!" says the newcomer. "Set out the best joy liquid in the place for the whole house."

He beckoned the men from the card tables to come up.

I was there—you see, I'd wander down after supper, now and then, just for fun.

"The whole house!" Elversett gasps in his surprise.

Whisky was sky-high in Yellow Creek then; it was considered more or less a luxury. There was twenty-five men in there, and a drink was worth twenty-five cents. Add it up for yourself; I'm too busy with my hosses to do anything with mathewmadicks.

But the stranger jerked out a roll the size of a fat jack-rabbit in the Wintertime and slammed it down on the bar.

"Help yourself, friend," he tells Elversett.

But all the while he kept a sharp eye on Elversett.

The men had lined up on both sides of the stranger before Elversett had come to himself. They all looked their admiration and done a good deal o' speculatin' as to who the newcomer was.

The next minute the stranger raised his glass with one hand and returned the fat roll to some place inside his blue flannel shirt with the other.

"Now drink to my health!" he yells. "Drink to the health of John Bill Jones!"

Say, you could hear them log walls rattle about like a big earthquake would have done. Twenty-five men yelled out, "Here's to John Bill Jones!"

Even Jim Elversett had to take a drink with the big-hearted stranger. And Jim wasn't a bit backward, believe me. Jim had a capacity all his own, which stuck at nothin' but price.

Two hours later, John Bill Jones had won another big roll o' money at cards. I'll just tell you right here, Jones was away yonder the slickest article in the card business that ever struck Yellow Creek. All of them got pretty full, Jones among the rest, by the way.

Then Jim Elversett unlimbered his mind of a thing that had been botherin' him for a couple o' weeks. He calls the new arrival behind the bar, confidential like, and says to him,

"Mr. Jones, I've got to hire a man to do a little job for me. You seem to have all kinds o' nerve. I want to hire you. It'll be worth fifty dollars to you."

"What is it?" Jones inquires.

"It's like this," Elversett starts in to explain. "There's a sky-pilot here, and he's goin' to kill my trade. Why, last Sunday night—last night, it was—there wasn't half a dozen men here. And along through the week it's havin' a big effect. I don't get half the trade I got before he come. I——"

"Well, get to the point," Jones interrupts. "What is it you want me to do?"

"I want you to run the preacher off," says Elversett. "I want you to go up to his house right now and rout him out o' bed and give him a mile-a-minute start toward the railroad, before any of his flock knows what's happened! See?"

By this time there was a dozen men hangin' over the bar and listenin' to the conversation between the barkeep and the stranger.

"How big a man is this sky-pilot?" Jones asks.

"He ain't any bigger than you, if as big," says Elversett.

At this John Bill Jones pulls off his guns and lays them under the bar.

"I don't need them things to put a preacher to flight with," he says boastfully. "I'm goin' after the sky-pilot, Mr. Elversett, and I'm goin' to pull him out o' bed in his nightclothes and give him that mile-a-minute start toward the railroad. All that wants to come along, come along, and don't let nothin' persuade you out o' the notion. There's goin' to be some fun, is my guess."

SO JOHN BILL JONES gets directions from Jim about the location of the preacher's cabin and starts out into the night. The crowd from the Red Violet follows him, of course. I hated to see Barker run out o' town, but I knowed it wouldn't do any good to enter a pro-

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test. And I also knowed the result of pokin' my nose into other people's business and didn't attempt to give any alarm. You see, that was a pretty bad bunch. Anyway, it was none o' my funeral. But I followed, kind o' bringin' up the rear, as you might say.

Up the creek we went, headed for the little cabin in the scrub on the hillside. It took us about ten minutes to cover the distance between the Red Violet and the residence of the preacher.

There was no light in the house. We judged that the preacher had gone to bed and wasn't surprised at all. John Bill Jones went up to the door and kicked it with his heavy boot.

"Come out and be neighborly!" he calls, and follows it up with a few choice cuss-words under his breath. John Bill Jones, by the way, could cuss by ear, by note, by the hour, day or month and avoid all repetition. He was the most accomplished artist in that line that ever struck Yellow Creek.

There was no answer to his call. The little cabin was as dark and still as a cemetery.

"Well, are you comin'?" Jones wants to know.

Again there was no answer. After a minute, Jones hauls away and kicks a board off o' the door. It was my property, but it was in Barker's care, and I didn't say anything to prevent the demolishment.

"I guess that'll bring him!" growls Jones, as the board clattered to the floor on the inside.

But it didn't. So Jones hauls away and kicks another board off; and he got no answer to that, either. At this he reels off another string o' fancy swear-words and slips through the hole in the door. He ransacked around for a minute, and then come back to the hole.

"Some o' you fellows pass me a match," he says.

They passed him several hundred, I guess. He struck a few one by one, and peeked around on the inside. Nobody there.

With that we filed down the hill and to the Red Violet. The others, no doubt, was disappointed; but I felt kind o' glad that the preacher had not been found.

The next mornin', after all the men had gone out to work—they was workin' back in the hills, then—I decided to stroll up to Barker's cabin while my hosses eat. It was curiosity, of course, to find out what he thought about his door bein' tore up. Barker was sittin' on the step, readin'.

He looked around as I come past the corner and smiled at me. Then he put his book down and dragged out a couple o' home-made chairs for us. We leaned back against the wall and lit our pipes. I then made a little comment in which the subject was a couple o' boards knocked off o' my door—it was my house, you know.

"Some low-down skunk," says Barker, "come along here last night and done it. I heard them comin', and I felt that they had some divilment in view; so I lit out and hid myself up in the scrub on the hill there. Brother Mott, have you got any idea what they wanted?"

Somehow I couldn't tell him a lie. I told him that a expert gun-man had come up the night before to run him off.

Barker laughed hard at this.

"Well, I declare!" he says. "Well, I do declare! John Bill Jones, eh? Well, well! He is goin' to run me off, eh? And without a gun, too! Brother Mott, you come to church next Sunday and watch me lambast John Bill Jones in my sermon. I want you to hear it. If he will continue to leave out the gun-play, Brother Mott, I can whip him before he can turn around. I am not only willin' to preach the gospel, Brother Mott; I am willin' and ready to fight to get the chance to preach it. Brother Mott, when Jones and I meet, Jones is goin' down! I am a strong man, Brother Mott——"

With that he jerks off a hoss-shoe that had been nailed above the door for good luck and twists it with his hands.

I went off hopeful that the preacher would win the fight when it come off. For I didn't see any other chance but that they'd fight when they met the first time.

DURING the week Jones won money hand over fist at cards. That is, for the next three nights he did. On Friday night there occurred a little thing that I thought would level up the enmity between Jones and the preacher. At the Red Violet Jones got into a quarrel with Squarehead Murphy—the town's former bad man—over a fifth ace.

Murphy reached for his gun, but Jones beat him to the draw, shootin' just above the top o' the table quick as lightnin'. Murphy went to the floor, shot through and

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through. One o' Murphy's friends started for Tenville, eight miles away, for the sheriff; a friend can hardly understand a case of self-defense, you know. Jones skinned out to let the matter adjust itself.

They sent me up after the preacher to come down and administer the last consolation Squarehead would ever feel on earth. Barker answered my rap on his door with an invitation to come in. I pushed the door open—he'd fixed the two boards, I noticed—and went inside. Barker was in bed.

"Who was hurt?" he asks the minute he sees me. He'd heard the shot, I guessed, and rightly.

"A fellow by the name o' Squarehead Murphy, the town's bad man before the advent of John Bill Jones," I told him. "He wants you to come down to see him and pray for him. And you'd better hurry, preacher," I adds, "or you'll be too late. It was John Bill Jones that killed him."

"Was Murphy much of a bad man?" asks the preacher.

"He was pretty tough, to tell you the straight of it," was my reply. "If Jones hadn't plugged him, he'd have plugged Jones, sure."

"Whose fault was it that Murphy drawed his gun?" the preacher goes on, while he dresses.

"I've got a suspicion that Jones had an extra ace," I tells him.

You see none of us was positive on the matter at the time.

Well, we hurried down to the Red Violet, and found the injured party about ready to breathe his last air. Barker went straight to him and whispered a few words of consolation and prayed. It seemed to do Murphy a sight o' good; he smiled and told us a word at a time that he believed he was at peace with everything and everybody.

I felt a little weak in the throat at this and begun to form'late plans in connection with chasin' Jones out o' the State. But, I thought after due consideration, it was none o' my funeral. Squarehead Murphy cashed in.

The next day we had the buryin'. The preacher himself made the box for the deceased. All knocked off from work to see it out. Everybody was there but John Bill Jones. It took place on the rocky plain below town. I had a couple o' Greasers to dig the hole, which was started about a dozen times on account o' the rocks.

Barker rose at the head o' the grave and read a few passages out of a book. He seemed to know just how to conduct an affair like that. Then we let the box down, and Barker prayed for about ten minutes—but we'll pass that by. It's unpleasant.

Just after we'd planted Squarehead, Sheriff Watkins and a deputy come in from Tenville to arrest John Bill Jones. The preacher joined them; he got on one o' my hosses and rode alongside of them through every pig-path in Yellow Creek, searchin' everywhere. They then took to the hills and searched everywhere that seemed a likely, or even a possible, place for a man to hide. But they didn't find him.

THAT night the sheriff and the preacher snooped around all night, eavesdroppin', watchin' doorways and the Red Violet Saloon. But not hair nor hide did they see of John Bill Jones.

So the sheriff and his deputy started back to Tenville early the next mornin', which was Sunday. Watkins said Jones undoubtedly had escaped to the railroad, and was gone for good. The preacher said he hoped so, as such a man was a positive menace to the community.

And at meetin' time, Barker got up behind his flour-barrel pulpit and preached about murderers and card-players and outlaws, and pointed out mighty plain the place they go to to reap their just reward.

"One John Bill Jones," he says, with his eyes flashin'—and it seemed that his teeth was wantin' to grind together with a terrible great resolution as he said it—"one John Bill Jones has took a notion that he wants to whip me. Brothers and sisters, if John Bill Jones ever tackles me man to man, without a gun, as he started to do, I'll beat him until he don't know where he's from. And as long as he leaves out the gun play, I want to ask you not to interfere.

"John Bill Jones is a snake, a thief; he is a thousand times lower than a Greaser or a coyote; he is the embodiment of all that is low and vile. And I'm not goin' to the trouble to caution you, brothers and sisters, to say nothin' about it. In fact, if Jones ever shows up any more, I ask you, as a special favor, to tell him what I have said as my honest opinion of him. The sooner we lock horns, the better for all concerned."

The house was silent as death for a min-

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ute; then, calm once more, Barker went on:

"But let us not discuss this worldly matter here. Brothers and sisters, we must have a bigger and a better church. It will cost us a thousand dollars to get the lumber. I'll buy the lumber and build the house with my own hands, if you will but furnish the thousand dollars."

He got the promise of the money by the next Sunday.

Monday night the usual games was in progress at the Red Violet, of course with the exception that a number of Elversett's patrons had gone over to the church, and therefore stayed at home. And, wonder of wonders, John Bill Jones, with his two ready guns strapped to his waist, walked into the Red Violet. Jones was not without friends, on account of his easy manner and big way, and quick trigger finger, too, I guess. He walks straight to the bar and raps on it same as he had done the first night of his arrival.

"Set 'em out for the house, Elversett!" he commands. "Then I'm goin' up to give chase to the sky-pilot. It has just come to my ears what he said concernin' me in his sermon yesterday, and such a thing can be wiped out only with a fight. And if he don't come out and fight me like a man, like he said he would, I'll shoot his eyes out and his ears off! Everybody drink with me, and then we'll all go to the circus!"

AS THE others gathered about the bar, I stole away and run as fast as my legs would carry me up to Barker's cabin on the hill. There was a candle burnin' on the shelf, but I saw nobody. I was mighty glad of it, for I was afraid Jones would go back on his word and pull off some gun-play. Stranger, he seemed mad enough for his very breath to wilt mesquite. The preacher, it struck me, was down in town visitin' some of his flock; he done that frequently in the daytime, and had left his light burnin' to guide him back up the hill. I hid in the scrub and waited for the crowd from the Red Violet.

And I didn't have long to wait. Pretty soon here comes John Bill Jones and his followin'. Straight up to the door comes Jones, and kicks it—*coslasharrammm!*

"Come out," he bawls, "you reel-footed, knock-kneed, banjo-backed, lop-eared, blare-eyed yap-of-the-devil, you, and fight me like you said you would—you——"

Stranger, it's not been so long ago, but I'm a little old and I forget just exactly how the rest of the openin' shot went.

Of course there was silence when Jones got out o' breath.

He kicks the door again.

"Come on out o' there, sky-pilot," he says, "and let me use your sanctified cyarcass to mow down the scrub off o' this hillside!"

These latter efforts not bein' answered, Jones lams himself against the door and tears the latch off. Then he enters and begins to shoot things up, princip'ly the floor. *Bang! Bang! Bang—bang!* goes his two forty-fives.

In two minutes the powder-smoke was so thick you could hardly see Jones. The floor looked like a sifter from bullet-holes. After reloadin' to be ready for a possible interference, Jones knocks things around like a crazy man, breaks things, and kicks the beddin' out into the yard. And all this time he accompanied his work of demolishment with a symphony of cuss-words.

We're gettin' close to Yellow Creek, now, and I'll have to hurry on. Do you see the loose and frayed end of a rope swingin' gently from the first limb of that tree over there between them two big rocks? You do? Well, who was a hangin' from that rope considerable less than a thousand years ago? Jones? Your guess is partly right, stranger, but Barker, too, was hung by the same rope and at the same time.

Stranger, a detective come after Barker, and arrested him in church, while he was takin' up the money supposed to go to the buyin' of lumber for the new church. It was his old racket; he was a notorious swindler. Jones? Wait, and I'll tell you all about Jones.

The people took Barker from the detective and ornamented that tree—or disgraced it, rather—with his cyarcass, and shot it so full o' lead that the weight broke the rope, I've heard said.

You've noted that John Bill Jones was seen only at night? When they searched Barker's cabin they found the guns, boots, shirt, hat, wig, mustaches, beard and complexion of John Bill Jones. They was both the same man, tryin' to work the good and the bad at the same time!

Now do you wonder why preachers and gun-men don't find Yellow Creek healthy?

Humph!

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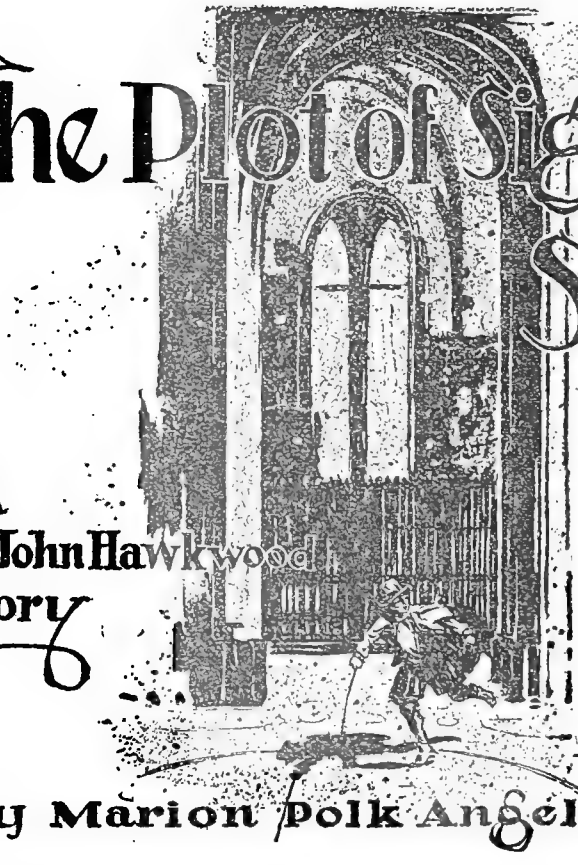
The Plot of Signor Salvi



A Sir John Hawkwood Story

by Marion Polk Angellotti

THERE are, to my mind, few things in this world so deeply ingrained in a man as his love of his country. He may owe her no good, may even have to thank her for injury and injustice. It does not matter, the tie remains. For example, long years since I numbered among my acquaintance a certain Frenchman, banished for some misstep in statecraft, hunted like a criminal by his sovereign, driven from Court to Court so vindictively that he never knew one night where he would lay his head the next.

So bitter had he grown that he was wont to declare his intention of enlisting in a foreign army and one day entering Paris sword in hand. Then came an evening when he and I lay together at a roadside inn. Among the guests was a noted bully who took this occasion to utter, between mouthfuls, some insult leveled against France. And my Frenchman gave him the lie, fought him in a space cleared between the tables, and lost his life in the conflict.

As for me, John Hawkwood, though I have passed two-score years soldiering in Italy and am well enough content to end my days here, this tie of birth is no weaker in me than in another man; and therefore I held it the greatest of the many honors heaped on me in the latter part of my life when the King of England availed himself of the fact that I was Captain-General of Florence and appointed me his ambassador to that Republic, as well as to the Court of Naples and the Holy See.

Had a serious difference arisen between Florence and England I would have found myself in no very agreeable imbroglio, considering that I was in the pay of both; but since matters moved along peaceably, all went well, and I took some pride in serving my country and more in serving King Richard, second of his name, who was the son of my old leader the Black Prince.

To speak frankly, I had never considered

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myself particularly fitted for diplomacy; but I did my best, and to my surprise and gratification found that it was possible to accomplish a good deal by sheer resolution and uncompromising grimness of front.

My greatest trial in my new *métier* proved, as time went on, to be one Walter Skirlawe, the Dean of St. Martin's, whom it pleased his Majesty to saddle on me as colleague and fellow-ambassador. An excellent and scholarly gentleman, for whom I had the highest esteem, he was far more useful in ordinary affairs than I was. But in any crisis, especially one of personal danger, he lost his head entirely, and displayed an apparent imbecility that came near to driving me mad.

This being the case, I was by no means overjoyed to hear one evening that he was awaiting me in my hall, and in a state, so my lackey informed me, of wild alarm and excitement. In the first place, I was far from being in a humor to listen patiently while he entertained me with tales of wo. Within the hour I had reached my villa after a month's absence at Pisa on the Republic's business; and now, seated at table, with Lady Hawkwood's dark eyes smiling into mine and our fingers stealing together in the pauses of our talk, I envied no crowned king, and was certainly not disposed to come out of my paradise for the purpose of changing words with Walter Skirlawe.

However, I knew enough of the worthy Dean to be quite sure that he would not desist from his quest until he had succeeded in unbosoming himself and forcing me to hearten him. So I submitted with a rueful laugh and a shrug of the shoulders.

"We will let him enter here, if you permit," I said to Lady Hawkwood. "Perhaps if he finds that he can not see me alone he will take himself off and leave us to ourselves—the saints grant it!"

"Amen to that prayer!" she whispered, laughing. "But listen, he must be in terror to come at such a pace as this, he who is so stately——"

THE door opened on her last word, and the Dean of St. Martin's half dashed, half stumbled into the room. Until he entered I had expected nothing more than some affair of a piece with his ordinary alarms, a molehill made into a mountain by too much worry; but I confess his appearance gave me a start, for however prone to fears a man may be, he does not turn white as chalk for nothing, nor do his eyes protrude from his head and his hands shake as if with palsy over a thing of no consequence.

"Sir John, Sir John! Praise Heaven you are returned!" he panted, as he staggered forward. "The fat is in the fire with a vengeance, and unless you can pull it out we must all shrive ourselves and prepare for the end!"

"What fat, pray? If the case is so desperate we had best lose no time in chatter," I said with rising irritation; for, being cool myself in moments of crisis, I find it hard to keep my patience with those whose wits go wandering just when they are most needed. "Come to the point, my friend. And do you not see that Lady Hawkwood is with us?"

He saluted her with a muttered apology that had all the sound of a moan, then suddenly dropped into a chair, laid his arms on the table, and dropped his head upon them, overturning with great clatter a gold dish of comfits and one of fruits.

Convinced by this time that there was something serious in the wind, I waved my lackeys out of the room, filled a cup with wine, and forced its rim between Skirlawe's teeth, emptying its contents down his throat.

"Come," I said as encouragingly as I could, while he groaned and straightened, "what is all this pother about, and what do you desire me to do?"

He fell back in his chair.

"Oh, you can do nothing! An angel from heaven could scarce save us!" he wailed, and I experienced a lively desire to force the truth from him at the dagger's point. "You would hear what has happened? Listen, then! A half-hour ago Peter Whyte was arrested just within the Porta Santa Maria for having stabbed a man near to death!"

For an instant I stared at him blankly, scarce able to believe my ears. Despite myself I had been sufficiently impressed to expect some startling disclosure, and his revelation left me divided between mirth and anger at his absurdity. This Peter was a member of my White Company, an English knave, thief, and cutthroat, who yet possessed his virtues — astonishing shrewdness, for instance, and courage, and fidelity to me as his Captain, though he was

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continually in trouble with me by reason of his escapades.

A few months earlier Skirlawe, who had more than once heard me tell how I had trusted very delicate matters to his quick wits and skill at swordplay, had craved my leave to use him on a private mission, which, as he told me nothing of its aim, was apparently shrouded in mystery; and I had agreed. Since that time I had not troubled my head about Peter, and this was my first news of him.

"Well, man, and what of it?" I demanded, when I had recovered the use of my tongue. "Upon my word, one might think you had gone mad! This is not the first time Peter has stabbed a foe, nor is it like to be the last; and if I lay awake o' nights every time such a thing occurred in the White Company, I should get little rest!"

THE Dean of St. Martin's waved both hands wildly in the air. "You do not understand, Sir John," he groaned. "He quarreled with a bully in the service of Messer Adriano Salvi of the Signoria, set near the gate to watch for him——"

"Faith, then, I commend Peter's taste," said I, with a laugh. "For a *scudo* I would follow my rogue's example and draw sword on old Salvi himself, who is forever scheming against me!"

"Scheming? That he is!" cried the Dean. "And now he will be triumphant, and oust you as both ambassador and Captain-General!"

"Heaven grant me patience!" I exclaimed, irritated beyond bearing. "Tell me the kernel of the matter in a word, unless you wish that I should go insane!"

Skirlawe collapsed once more in a woful heap.

"Can you not see?" he lamented. "They have taken him to the Bargello, to the Capitano di Giustizia, who will have no choice but to order him imprisoned for trial. And since all who are imprisoned are searched, the packet will be discovered, even as Salvi planned."

The packet! Now indeed we were coming to the truth.

"Quick, man!" I urged, as he paused to wring his hands.

"I scarce dare tell you, Sir John. You will be angered, and with some cause," he wailed. "The matter concerns the treaty which you made lately between England and Florence, as against Milan. It appears that his Majesty and his ministers, though friendly to Florence, had no wish to quarrel with Milan either. So they planned to arrange a secret treaty with the Milanese Duke, Visconti, that they might stand well with both sides. You see? To be sure, Florence would take this ill if she knew; but why need she know? And why should you know either, since you are—forgive me that I say it—a soldier, and blunt, and little disposed to concealment? So his Majesty confided it only to me, bidding me inform myself of its further progress through Sir Nicholas Dagworth, our envoy to Milan; and I took for messenger this trusty Peter of yours, who has now carried two messages from me to Sir Nicholas and returned with others."

"A curse upon it!" I cried savagely, as the truth burst on me.

"But the matter has come to nothing," he urged propitiatingly, "for the Duke of Milan was minded to ask too much. I do not doubt that the very packet brought tonight by your Peter would have told me all was ended, and that we might devote ourselves heart and soul to Florence."

"Aye, she will want our devotion, will she not, when she learns we have leagued behind her back with her worst enemies!" I mocked bitterly. "A rare pass we are come to, with your cursed double-dealing and treachery! If this is diplomacy, then I thank Heaven I am a soldier! Giovanni! Tomaso! My hat and cloak on the instant!"

"Wherefore, Sir John? What is it you intend?" cried the Dean, wildly clutching at my arm.

"What but to get back that packet at whatever cost?" I demanded. "Did you think me likely to sit here feasting while Salvi relates his tale to the Signoria, then?"

"You can do nothing! We are all doomed!" was his cheerful prophecy, as he buried his head in his hands once more.

Lady Hawkwood, who throughout the scene had sat pale and silent, but calm enough to put both the Dean and myself to shame, laid her fingers on my sleeve.

"I will keep him here," she whispered, "lest he betray this elsewhere. Hasten, Sir John. You will succeed, I know it well."

I lingered only to raise her hand to my

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lips, and then dashed from the room and through my hall into the night.

II

I WAS panting with exhaustion as I reached the great looming pile of the Bargello with its gleaming windows and square-arched tower, and, changing my run for a hasty stride, passed into the colonnaded loggia. The distance hither from my house was no small one, and I had traversed it, I verily believe, in less time than ever man did before. Moreover, the thoughts that kept me company had been such that I trust Heaven in its mercy will kill me before visiting me with any repetition of the experience.

Would I be in time? Freely I acknowledged that it was not likely. Ah, the accursed shrewdness of my foe Salvi's plot! Somehow he had got wind of the fact that Skirlawe was dealing privately between Milan and England; at once he had planned this brawl—an easy thing to accomplish with one of Peter's temper—and the arrest, the search, and the discovery of the packet.

The good Gonfaloniere Francesco de' Medici and the members of the Signoria would believe me a traitor, and, worse, believe England treacherous. Perhaps they would hang me before morning; I confessed frankly to myself that I should not blame them a whit if they did. In the name of all the saints, what had inspired the King to such a double-dealing step? Did he not know that a sovereign can hope for good faith in others only when he maintains it himself?

Ah, well, he was little more than a boy, and surrounded by men so steeped in the thing called policy that they could scarce believe any good could come of honest dealing. And firstly and lastly and above all, he was the son of the Black Prince, my old leader and hero, and it should go hard with me before I would let his indiscretion become known to Salvi of the Signoria and trumpeted over Florence. For the moment, believe it or not as you choose, I was more concerned for his sake than for myself.

But one hope remained. I must arrive before the interrogation was ended and Peter committed to prison. If I could do that, I might in some way free him, though heaven alone knew how, for I racked my brain without success for an inspiration. Fervently I breathed a prayer that Salvi himself would not be present to increase my difficulties; and I was inclined to believe that this much would be granted me, since he would probably not wish to pose as having planned my downfall.

There were two sentinels at the north gate, but they recognized me and drew back with a salute, and I crossed the courtyard and ran up the carved staircase three steps at a time. In the gallery I found myself confronted by half-a-dozen obsequiously bowing lackeys.

"Was it your wish, Sir John, to see the Capitano di Giustizia?" one of them asked me. "He is within, and I will announce you on the instant——"

"You may spare yourself the trouble, my friend," I said grimly, "for, truth to tell, I have a fancy to enter unannounced."

And I forced a way through them and entered the great hall of the council. It lay empty; but as I crossed it I heard from the inner room, where the Capitano was wont to conduct his examinations, an indignant, strident voice that assuredly belonged to no one but Peter himself.

"A curse on it!" the rogue was vociferating. "If my Captain, Sir John Hawkwood, stood there before us I think you would use a bit more ceremony with a soldier of the White Company!"

In that instant a heavy weight of despair seemed to pass from my heart. I was in time; and, better still, Peter's foolish bit of bravado had given me the very idea I needed. Now, at last, I knew how to deal with the matter. I straightened, assumed a grimly threatening air, and opened the door without the formality of a knock.

IN HIS chair of state sat the Capitano di Giustizia, one Marco Ridolfi, an honest fellow enough, though not too clever; and before him, flushed and disheveled and with a great blood-streak across his face, stood my rogue Peter. A pair of guards, too, were present, a half-dozen members of the watch, and an *écrivain* busily engaged in writing down every word that fell from the culprit's lips.

As they all looked up to see who intruded, I gathered that two at least of the party would rather have had me elsewhere; for Ridolfi stared at me with a dropping jaw, and as for Peter, who had a moment earlier

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been calling so loudly on my name, instead of looking pleased at my advent, he gave back a step in manifest alarm, while his bloody face lost its truculence and assumed a meek look that would have amused me at another time.

The Capitano was the first to recover himself.

"Why, Sir John, I had not known that you were returned from Pisa! Your presence honors me," he cried.

But judging from his expression rather than his glib tongue, he would have dispensed with the honor and felt small grief.

As for me, I made no pretense of acknowledging his civility, but advanced into the center of the room and favored the company with a black scowl.

"You had not known that I had returned!" I said grimly. "Aye, it is plain enough, that! Else I think you would have been more careful how you usurped my rights! Well, I have a way of appearing where I am needed, Messer Marco, and I am not one to pass over such interference."

"But, Sir John, indeed I intend no offense," protested the Capitano. "Come, consider the matter reasonably. What can I do when the men of the watch bring me a soldier found in the act of stabbing a citizen? But calm yourself, for if you desire a pardon for this fellow, the Republic will certainly deny nothing to one it loves as well as you. I, myself, will back your plea if you wish it!"

"You intend no offense!" I echoed him unrelentingly, ignoring the latter part of his speech. "Then your actions fit your intentions very ill. Go read the signed charter which Florence gave me when she made me Captain-General, and tell me whether it is not plainly written there that I have the right to deal myself with the misdemeanors of my men! As for you, Messer Marco, you have no more to do with this fellow and his acts than with the King of England himself, and so I would tell your Gonfaloniere, he who stands for the Republic, if he sought to meddle in what touched me alone!"

For the second time Ridolfi's jaw dropped; it was not his night to cut a brave figure, this.

"Why, it is true, Sir John," he muttered dazedly, after a somewhat lengthy pause which I made no effort to break. "You have the right, indeed! But you have never claimed it—it had fallen into abeyance. For my part, I vow I had forgotten it utterly."

"Well, it exists, for all that," I retorted, "and if I choose to claim it again, it is nobody's business but my own."

And then I wheeled upon Peter, who backed away from me as if minded to take shelter behind the *écrivain*. If my bearing had been truculent before, it now became furious, though all the time, could they but have known it, I was shaking in my boots for fear that Salvi would descend upon us, see his prey slipping from him, and inform Ridolfi of the truth.

"I will deal with this affair myself, without the help of the Republic!" I stormed, with every appearance of rage. "It goes too far, this ruffling and dueling, this interference with peaceful citizens of the town that gives us our bread!" Salvi's man had, in the nature of things, probably been anything but peaceful, but this was no time to split straws. "A rare pass, when I can not turn my back on Florence for a week without some such news as this to greet me on my return! I have ordered a thousand times that these brawls should end, and here we have the result! For a *scudo*, I would disband the entire Company, for I am near maddened by this set of graceless knaves with their plundering and stabbing and rioting!"

And so I thundered on, uttering whatever ideas came into my head, and all the time listening for the sound of Salvi's step. In the midst of my harangue, too, I came near losing all self-control and rocking with laughter at sight of Peter's face.

In his preoccupation over himself and his affairs he had utterly forgotten the packet he carried, and believed me honestly enraged at his conduct; and since he knew me well, it was plain he would infinitely have preferred to take his chances with the easy-going Florentine Republic, which would not have been too hard on a soldier of the popular White Company. As for the Capitano, he was in a state of helpless puzzle, and small wonder; for he must have been aware that I was not in the habit of troubling myself greatly over the vagaries of my men.

"Oh, take the fellow, Sir John, in the name of the saints!" he cried, raising his hands despairingly, and no doubt feeling as if a tornado had been let loose in his hall of

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justice. "You are welcome to him, since it is your right."

"To be sure it is, and I will thank you to remember as much another time!" I snapped ungraciously. "Follow me, you!"

And, with Peter trailing meekly at my heels, I strode out of the room as hastily as I might.

III

IF I had been inclined to flatter myself on having brought a perilous business to a successful ending, I was doomed to discover my mistake in short order. Peter and I passed unhindered down the stairs and out the gate. Then some one jostled against me in the darkness of the street and passed quickly on; and, looking back over my shoulder, I saw the lights at the Bargello entrance flare full across Salvi's eager face.

Here indeed was a pretty state of affairs! He had come to see whether the packet had been discovered, that went without the saying; he would find Peter vanished under my escort. In two minutes, the Capitano would hear the truth, and in three the alarm would ring out and the street would be thronged with men. However, if I failed now it should not be my fault.

"Quick, man, the packet!" I muttered, seizing Peter's arm.

He stood there, staring stupidly at me, as I divined in spite of the darkness, for so long that it would have given me pleasure to shake him had there been more time at my disposal.

"Your pardon, Sir John?" he stammered.

"The packet!" I hissed again. "You fool, did you think I came here to-night for your sake? Little enough loss you would have been to me had the Republic hanged you, with your cursed stupidity in quarreling with Salvi's man and playing into his hands!"

He understood at last.

"Oh, aye, the packet! An instant, Sir John!" he cried, with, by all the saints, relief in his tone!

In that moment, it was plain, he cared nothing for the honor of England, or for anything else on earth save the one fact that my rage at him had been pretense. With an awkward slowness that made me frantic he unearthed the cause of all the mischief, and I thrust it into my doublet, breathing a sigh of content as I felt the heavy seal beneath my fingers. At that very instant I heard a great uproar within the Bargello, many shouting voices, the sound of running feet. Salvi had done his work well.

Once more I seized Peter's arm.

"Run!" I muttered. "Run as though the devil himself were at your heels! Let them hear you run, too. Lead them a chase over the whole city, and in the end let them take you and find that you carry nothing! But take heed that they pursue you long enough to let me reach my villa in safety, for if I do not——"

I had no time to finish the threat. Already the men were at the gate of the Bargello. On the left side of the street, close at my elbow, was a dark stone gateway, and I slipped through it and flattened myself against the wall within, while Peter, entering into his part with a zest I had scarce expected of him, gave a loud terrified cry and clattered off in so uproarious a flight that the deafest of pursuers could not have failed to mark it.

A score of men had dashed out now, bearing torches and weapons, and on marking Peter's departure they gave utterance to a view-halloo and swept on his track, passing within five feet of where I lay in my hiding-place.

So far, so good. I crouched motionless, hearing the sounds of the pursuit grow fainter and fainter, the tread of running feet die on the stones. Complacently I assured myself that I need feel no further alarm, for Peter was an excellent runner and quite at home in the winding byways of Florence, and would certainly baffle those at his heels for a good half-hour. Meanwhile, I had best get back to my villa. I crept forward cautiously, feeling the wall as I advanced; then suddenly tripped over a loose stone, and measured my length on the pavement in a fashion noisy enough to wake the dead.

ON THE instant a loud triumphant shout rang out from the Bargello gate, followed closely, as I scrambled to my feet, by a sound that I can truthfully say was less welcome to me than ever sound was before—the noise of hurrying men. Some guard had, it was evident, imagined from the commotion I had made that Peter had eluded pursuit and was lurking in the neighborhood.

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Within the moment they would be upon me—and for John Hawkwood, Captain-General of Florence, to be taken with the treacherous packet on his person would be worse a thousand times than its discovery on my soldier. All things considered, then, I had no choice but to adopt a course which those who know me will bear witness was not my usual mode of meeting difficulties—to take to my heels even as Peter had done. Without a second's hesitation I sprang from beneath my sheltering gateway and dashed off down the street.

The shout that rang out behind me was ample proof that I had not got away unobserved. After me swept my pursuers, in frantic haste. Truth to tell, the predicament was a desperate one, for I had the briefest of starts; yet, unreasonably enough, my spirits were already rising, for I was more in my element with a score of men after me than lurking perdue in a dark gateway. Let them not exult too soon, these urgent gentlemen, for they did not yet know who it was they followed, and I would lead them a rare chase before surrendering myself and what I carried with me!

I had been, of course, in the Via del Proconsolo when the alarm rang out. Down it I dashed at full speed. Heaven be praised, I was an excellent runner, and fairly safe unless I should find my way blocked by some peasant's cart, or unless my pursuers should head me off by a detour, contingencies upon which, on the whole, I preferred not to dwell.

The entire neighborhood was by now awaking to the fact that something unusual was afoot. Windows were thrown open and heads thrust out; but as Florentines are for the most part prudent folk, with a marked distaste for meddling with what does not nearly touch them, the good citizens made no attempt to stay my flight.

A late moon was rising, faintly lighting the Via del Proconsolo, which is long and broad, and as good a race-course as man could ask. I flattered myself that as I sped down it I gained a little. More than once I encountered a wayfarer, and twice I found myself confronted by a small group; but to my fervent relief they gave back hastily to the side of the street, thus earning themselves, I fancy, heartfelt curses from the Capitano's men. So, unchallenged, I sped the entire length of the road, and dashed into the great Piazza del Duomo.

It is a beautiful sight, that cathedral, with its gleaming colored marbles and the strangely sculptured tower of Giotto's building; but if you think I gave it a glance now you are much mistaken. How was I to give the slip to the knaves at my heels? The question beat itself unceasingly in my ears. Perhaps the best of all my chances was to slip into one of the many streets converging into the Piazza, and so leave them with a lost scent; at any rate, the idea was worth a trial.

Racing across the moon-lit space, and running on the balls of my feet lest the noise I made should betray me, I sprang into the Corso degli Adimari, and to my dismay found myself face to face with a fat, comfortable-looking man in a rich mantle, evidently a well-to-do merchant, followed by a servant with a lantern. There was nothing to do save dive on past him, and this I did, praying that he had not recognized me and would refrain from putting my pursuers on my track. The first of my prayers was granted, the second ignored.

As I fled on down the street I could hear him crying in a quavering, excited voice to the Capitano's men, who had presumably halted in the Piazza to listen for sounds that might reveal to them where I had vanished.

"Yonder, messers! Down the Corso! He went that way, the man you seek!"

WELL, I had no breath to waste in comment, but mentally I bestowed something other than a benediction on him as I heard the pursuit sweep after me once more. Also, though my danger was increasing every moment, I set my teeth and vowed to baffle these bloodhounds yet.

At present I was rushing down a street lined with the great houses of Florentine nobles, and the men-at-arms of these gentry were, alas, proving themselves a good deal more disposed to join the fray than others had been hitherto, as I gathered from the fact that my pursuers were growing continually in numbers. Reassuring myself with the thought that so long as they kept behind me and not before me there remained hope, I dashed into the narrow Via dei Pittori, passed the stone pile of Or San Michele with its rounded arches,

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and emerged into the Piazza della Signoria as if I had wings to my feet.

The most perilous part of my adventure was now close upon me, for how could I hope to pass through this great square, blocked solidly with palaces, and neither be recognized nor halted? The bare thought was madness! Yet I darted across at full speed, running close against the Loggia dei Lanzi to avoid, as far as I could, the flickering torches that shone before the Palazzo Vecchio.

A group barred my way. I hurtled through it, sending two men to earth. An alarm rang out, a throng of guards poured from three gates at once, a hundred voices beat in my ears, calling on me to halt. But already, the saints be praised, I was out of the Piazza and in the comparative darkness and security of the Via dei Gondi.

Well, I asked myself as I ran, how much longer was this to continue? I was neither losing nor gaining; so far as I could see, the chase might well endure till dawn and find us still circling about the city. Indeed, unless I altered my course in short order I would soon find myself passing again between the Bargello and the abbey of the Badia, at the very spot where I had begun my flight. For the life of me I could not but perceive the humor of the situation: that I, Captain-General of Florence, and entitled by virtue of my position to command every man-at-arms in the city, should be fleeing from these fellows like a hare with a pack of dogs in full cry.

Unfortunately, I must confess that I saw a much less diverting side of the matter. It had been many a long day since I had indulged in a run like this, and my breath was coming unpleasantly hard. Wondering what would happen when it failed me altogether, I dashed into the Piazza Sant' Appollinare, and on the instant became aware of something that turned me cold in every limb.

From before me, as well as behind me, came the sound of voices and the clatter of feet! Instantly I understood. The men of the city watch, whom I had hitherto escaped meeting by some miraculous dispensation from above, were approaching from the other direction, and not in any leisurely fashion either, for they had guessed from the uproar that some fray was afoot and had promptly experienced a very creditable desire to join in it.

A few instants more, and the Piazza would be seething with men, and I should be taken red-handed. The tumult grew; the Capitano's rogues, awaking to the situation, uttered ear-splitting yells of triumph, which found a prompt echo from before me. For a brief moment I halted, panting, my wits working as they had never worked yet.

The voices grew louder still, the light of the advancing torches began to glow faintly in the square, and I wheeled, sprang across to the Church of Sant' Appollinare, and, letting myself through the door, drew it noiselessly shut behind me.

I had followed a desperate impulse, an inspiration, a what you will; and I was perfectly aware that I might find myself a good deal worse off than formerly, if, for example, some penitent chanced to be spending the night at prayer before the altar. However, to my huge relief, the place was empty. I caught a dim vista of sculptured columns, niched saints, frescoed angels gleaming in the dim light of the burning candles; then I stole down the north aisle, slipped into the darkest and smallest of the chapels, and flung myself flat on the floor.

I was panting desperately, and so spent that I thought my pursuers likely, if successful, to find a dead man instead of a live one. Ah, well, the game was out of my hands now. I had, so to speak, taken sanctuary. Let the saints lift the rest of the business to their own shoulders, and aid or doom me as they chose.

THE Piazza without was now in such a state of tumult that one might have thought the Duke of Milan, the great enemy of Florence, at the city walls. Feet ran desperately hither and thither, fifty voices cried out at once, and on my couch of cold stone I chuckled under my breath as I heard the watch and the Capitano's men each accusing the other of having let the quarry slip through their fingers. But my content was fated to be short-lived.

"Come, stir yourselves a bit! All is not lost yet. Who knows but the fellow, whoever he may be, is in one of these houses?" cried the leader of the Capitano's force, who would have conceived this clever idea a good deal sooner if he had been a soldier worth his salt.

Instantly there was great confusion;

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some cried out that they had better search the houses of the Magalotti, which bordered an entire side of the square; others were for invading the doors of Messer Mancini. The servants of these families, as nearly as I could gather from the babel, denied that any one had entered their gates, and vigorously opposed the invasion, thus causing something like a riot.

At this point, a voice proclaimed over the tumult—one of Mancini's lackeys it was, I fancy, trying to divert the commotion from his master's dwelling—that perhaps the man they sought was in the church; and an instant later the door of Sant' Appollinare was thrown violently open.

I lay very still, holding my breath. Surely all hope was now gone; and I kept one hand in my breast, clasped about the packet, and the other on my sword; for if the worst came to the worst, I did not mean to leave the church alive.

To my great bewilderment, however, nothing happened. The invaders roamed about a little, making their investigations only near the entrance, and then:

"Oh, let us be gone! You can see for yourselves there is nobody here!" one cried pettishly, quite as if he had expected a desperate fugitive to place himself before the high altar where he could not fail to be seen.

"To be sure," another sapient member of the party commented, very out of temper. "What man of sense would hide himself in a building sure to be searched? And he is no fool, this rogue, to judge from the chase he has led us!"

Whereupon they went out cursing, and I heard them informing their leader that they had searched the church from end to end, and that there was no one to be found.

"A plague take it!" snapped the Capitano's officer. "Where is he, then? For my part, I believe he turned down the Via del Leone just before we entered the Piazza. Indeed, I fancied I saw a form glide that way!" And no doubt he had fancied so; one can imagine anything, and this is especially true in the case of such an imbecile as he was rapidly proving himself.

The suggestion was greeted with acclaim, since all were now weary of the fruitless hunt about the Piazza. To my unbelieving delight, for I vow I would scarce have credited such a happening if foretold to me by one of the saints in person, there was a concerted move toward the Via del Leone. And best of all, with a stupidity quite in keeping with their conduct throughout the whole affair, they refrained from even leaving a small guard to watch the Piazza while they were gone.

For some time I lay at ease on the chapel pavement, listening to the sound of departing feet and voices, chuckling rapturously at my own thoughts. Then, convinced that the square was at peace again, I stole down the aisle and slipped out into the night, and with the leisurely assurance of one respected by the whole Republic took my way toward my distant villa.

IV

WHEN I at last reached home after a most peaceable transit of Florence, I found the Dean of St. Martin's sitting much as I had left him, with his arms on the table and his head bent over them, and Lady Hawkwood facing him from her seat with perfect calm, though she was pale and her hands were tightly clenched in her lap. As I appeared she did not speak or stir, but her look met mine in anxious questioning, and my nod had reassured her even before the Dean awoke to the fact of my entrance and leaped wildly to his feet.

"What news, Sir John? Tell me in a word! I can bear this no longer—I am wellnigh mad!" he stammered, his eyes on the point of popping from his head. "Each instant of your absence was a torment to me! Where have you been, then?"

"Where have I not been?" said I, with a last chuckle at thought of my adventures. "But come, man, pluck up heart and rub a bit of color into your cheeks! Here is something that will cheer you," and I thrust my hand into my doublet and pulled out the famous packet, a small unimposing thing enough save for the blazoning of its great gold seal!

Walter Skirlawe fell back with a choked cry of relief.

"Sir John, Sir John, I believe there is no miracle you could not work," he babbled, "and I will remember you in my prayers to the end of time!"

"It will be more to the purpose if you refrain from providing any more such miracles for my working," I responded without

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gratitude, "for you have given me a busier evening than I fancy. And now I think I have earned a peep at this document even though it was not intended for my eyes."

Being fully occupied in offering up thanks for his deliverance, he made no objection, and I ripped the packet open with my dagger and glanced hastily over the contents, breathing a sigh of relief as I read the last line and noted that the secret treaty with Milan was definitely broken off.

"A good end to all this double-dealing!" I muttered, as I held the parchment to the flame of the candle and watched it crackle and burn to the very edge.

And at that instant, as though we were all acting in a play and the final scene had been reserved for a dramatic moment, one of my lackeys hastened into the room and announced the arrival of three distinguished visitors.

"My lord the Gonfaloniere, Sir John—Messer Salvi of the Signoria—the Capitano di Giustizia. They desire to see you at once on a matter of great urgency. Is it your wish that I should bring them here?"

The Dean of St. Martin's leaped to his feet with a piercing shriek.

"We are lost!" he moaned, like a man in the last extremity of torment. "They have come, Sir John! Do you hear, they have come!"

"Let them!" said I, thrusting the ashes of the parchment beneath a dish of fruit. "Little enough I care for their coming now!" Then, catching sight of his face, I added hastily, "But in Heaven's name do you go through that door and wait within! One look at you would suffice to prove us guilty though angels spoke in our defense! As for you, Giovanni, tell my guests that I beg them to join me here."

As Skirlawe stumbled out of sight and the lackey departed, I turned to Lady Hawkwood; but she shook her head.

"Let me stay. Indeed I must be with you now," she whispered, and I had but time to nod and cast myself into a seat with every appearance of having lounged there an hour, when Giovanni ushered in a *cortège* consisting of the Gonfaloniere of Florence, red-faced and ill at ease and plainly very unhappy over his errand; the good Capitano, no less embarrassed; and, lastly, Messer Adriano Salvi, glowering at me in anything but friendly fashion.

"YOUR pardon, Sir John, that we intrude on you and your lady," the Gonfaloniere stammered, as he saluted us. He was my good friend, and had come, I was sure, much against his will. "We are here to ask you concerning a matter that is doubtless most simple when explained. Never think, Sir John, we could doubt you after all your services——"

I had risen and was confronting them across the table.

"I am a soldier, my lord, and plain dealing pleases me best," I said grimly. "You have come to accuse me of something. Your manner and Messer Salvi's presence are ample warrant of that. Well, let me hear the latest accusation of this foe of mine!"

"Nay, Sir John, nay," protested the Gonfaloniere eagerly, "I swear on my soul I trust you as I trust myself! But since you urge frankness on me, Messer Salvi here is so far deceived as to suspect you of intriguing with Milan to our hurt!"

For a moment I stared incredulously at the three men. Then I made them a stern salutation.

"Very good, signori," I responded. "In return for my years of service, the battles I have won for Florence, the blood I have shed that she might know safety, you impute treason to me—the first time, believe me, that such an accusation has fallen on my ears. It is plain that you desire me no more for Captain-General of the Republic. So be it. To-morrow I leave your city!"

The Gonfaloniere and the Capitano started back, no doubt with visions of all Italy thundering at their unprotected gates; and one glance at their horrified faces must have killed Salvi's last hope.

"Sir John! Sir John!" cried the wretched Gonfaloniere. "Such a thought had never passed through my mind. For my part, I would never have come here but for Messer Salvi——"

Looking straight into his eyes, I spoke the plain truth for once that night, and glad enough I was to do it, for, after all, the Florentines were my friends, and I would have died sooner than betray their trust.

"My lord," said I, "because of our long alliance I will be patient. I swear on my honor that never have I dealt with Visconti save sword in hand; and moreover I swear that my lord the King of England intends

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no treaty with Milan and will keep full faith with Florence."

From my good friend the Gonfaloniere came an audible sigh of relief, which found prompt echo from the Capitano di Giustizia.

"No need of a word more, Sir John," the former cried with great heartiness. "Why, see you, as we came here I pointed out to Messer Salvi that he was mad to think this English soldier of yours bore a packet from Visconti. For though the Capitano's men caught him after chasing him like a hare over half the city—after chasing two rogues, indeed, since it appears one party followed on a false scent and pursued some knave who led them a race for his own diversion and gave them the slip at last—when they came to search him, not the ghost of a packet could they find!"

For a moment I stared at him. Then I burst into a shout of laughter which I was at great pains to make hearty.

"Now by my golden spurs," I cried, "here is the rarest pother over nothing that ever I saw! To be sure, the fellow had a packet; and when I parted with him by the Bargello, after bidding him come settle with me to-morrow for this brawl of his, I took the dispatch from him and strolled home most peaceably with it beneath my arm. Had you come to me, instead of chasing Peter all over Florence and filling his head with notions of his own importance, I would have set your minds at rest with a glimpse at this deadly parchment that has kept all Florence awake. Come, read it now, though it will make you look a bit foolish to see for what cause you have lost your sleep!"

So saying, I strode over to a cabinet by the wall, and took from it a packet so like the cause of all the tumult that, had the Dean of St. Martin's been among the company, he would have fainted for sheer terror. But it was, in truth, a harmless document enough, sent me a month earlier by the King and his ministers, and agreeing with apparent heartiness to my treaty with Florence against Milan.

"Read it, see how I plot against you and sell you to your foes!" I jeered, as I flung it across the table.

THE Gonfaloniere perused it eagerly, Messer Marco and old Salvi in a way that struck me as somewhat informal, reading it one across each of his shoulders; then he came forward and seized both my hands.

"Forgive us, Sir John," he muttered; and I swear there were tears in his eyes. "You are, as always, our best friend!"

"It is not from you I want excuses," I answered meaningly, as, swinging about, I fixed a narrowed gaze on my foe. "It is Messer Salvi here, I understand, who brought this charge against me. I await what he has to say."

We faced each other for an instant, the old rogue battling with his rage and disappointment. He was clever enough to guess the truth of the matter, but then, what proof had he? With a final effort he mastered himself and yielded. "I have been at fault, Sir John, through my zeal for Florence," he told me suavely, "and I crave forgiveness most humbly for a mistake which shall not be made again."

His meaning was, I took it, that he would not a second time accuse me till he knew beyond question that he could get the better of me. However, I gave him a curt nod.

"Then let the matter end here," I said. "And now, signori, though at another time I will gladly entertain you at my house, this is my home-coming, and I have a fancy to celebrate it alone."

With a renewed murmur of apologies they took themselves out of the room, like children glad to escape a master. The door closed behind them. Lady Hawkwood and I looked at each other and laughed. Then, hand in hand, and quite forgetful of the fact that the Dean of St. Martin's was waiting in an agony to learn the issue of the affair, we turned together toward the door that led out into our moonlit garden.

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The Fighting Dwarfs of the Congo

by Captain Fritz Duquesne

IN THE vast forest that stretches from the turbid Zambezi in the south to the fringe of the Sahara and spreads from the lowlands of the west coast to the string of huge lakes above the Nile, dwell a strange little people, the dwarfs of the Congo, the pygmies of the Greek romancers. It is likely that they are the offspring of the aborigines of Africa. These dwarfs are closely related to the Hottentots, and the Bushmen who live on the plains of the Kalihari, and formerly roved over the whole peninsula of the Cape of Good Hope.

On the coming of the white man with his superior physique and mysterious arms, the Hottentots and the Bushmen took refuge in the wilderness of sun-scorched sands northwest of the Orange River. Along the eastern stretch of southern Africa, the warring negroes also forced the little people back into the impenetrable forest and the impassable desert where they defied pursuit by their agility and cunning.

Even up to our own day, with all her artful instruments of war and highly drilled troops, Germany has not been able to subdue them by the outlay of millions of dollars and thousands of lives.

Chameleon like, these queer little people adapt themselves to their surroundings. Hardships that would kill ordinary men, whether black or white, have confirmed their endurance and sharpened their faculties. They are vaguely distinguished by loosely applied tribal names, but the general name which they have taken for themselves is Wachua, which the Bantu have clipped with their tongue to Akka.

Passing over the allied Bushmen and the Hottentots, there are two notably distinct branches of the pygmy people. Some African travelers and ethnologists make three divisions, distinguishing the branch that inhabits the Samliki forest between the Sahara and the Congo.

This branch is called the Mubvanuma, and differs from the others distinctively in the shortness of the legs, which are hardly a third of the length of the whole body. The other two are markedly diverse in color, one black, the other yellow; known respectively as the Mukongo and the Manande.

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THE SMALLEST OF THE PYGMIES

THE Manande are the smallest of the pygmy people, and the most intelligent. They are from four feet to four feet seven inches in height, the women being about five inches shorter than the men. The Mukongo, ranging perhaps two inches taller, are physically inferior. Both the yellow and the black dwarfs are coated with fine, downy hair, and the males have heavy beards on their chins and lips.

The face of the pygmy is not negroid in cast. The forehead bulges over the eyes, which are set deep in the head, and have a peculiar expression that suggests the intelligence of a pet animal rather than that of a human being. The nose is short, with a depressed bridge and spreading nostrils. The lips are long and thin, and do not protrude like those of a negro.

Except in the vicinity of a mission station, or a white man's habitation, the dwarfs wear no covering. No tattooing or ornamentation is practised, except by a small tribe in the east of the Congo, opposite Uganda. The females of this tribe make several splits in the upper lip and insert porcupine quills, bones, flowers, leopards' teeth, and various other knick-knacks that take their fancy.

All are deformed by the incessant practise of gorging. After a full meal, the belly is distended out of all proportion to the figure. This gives the arms and legs an exaggerated appearance of thinness. The stomach is evidently very elastic, for when it is empty, the abdomen will hang in sack-like folds from the chest; when filled, it is puffed out like an inflated bladder.

THE PEOPLE OF MONSTROUS APPETITES

THE pygmy will eat at a meal from forty to sixty bananas, and then fall groaning on the ground. Strangely enough, as soon as a meal is digested, the dwarfs are ravenous again, and gorge themselves repeatedly, regardless of their suffering. When they are not satisfying their appetites, they are looking for something with which to fill their stomachs in the future. The banana is their stock food, but they will eat greedily the flesh of any of the forest animals, which they are experts in hunting.

Although they have been accused of cannibalism, I have in my travels met but one who ate human flesh. This I think he did imitatively, for he was living on the outskirts of a village inhabited by a cannibal tribe on the Ubanghi River. I questioned this little man through an interpreter,

"Why did you eat human flesh?"

He replied, "Because I had a right to. What I ate was my own son, and if a man may not eat his own son, what may he eat?"

Notwithstanding this, I do not believe that the pygmies make a practise of cannibalism. Many that I have questioned abhor the idea of eating human flesh.

If these people ever spoke a language of their own, nobody has ever taken the pains to discover it. They generally live on the outskirts of some powerful negro tribe and adopt, with many mispronunciations and faulty syntax, the language of their neighbors.

Commonly the little people live on good terms with the big negroes, whom they protect, and by whom they are protected. While the dwarfs have no fear of the negro, the negro lives in constant dread of the dwarf and will never offend one wilfully. Although loosely attaching himself to a tribe, the pygmy is completely independent, and at the slightest offense, real or imaginary, will attack his big neighbors, waging a war which ends with an apology from the negroes and peace-making by presents of wire and spearheads, all that the pygmy really requires in the pursuits of his life.

The dwarfs are a certain safeguard to the tribes to which they attach themselves, for, like the bird that warns the rhinoceros of the hunters' approach, these little men, outspread like pickets in the dense forest around the negro villages, detect in advance the approach of an enemy, and give timely warning.

It can not be said rightly that the dwarfs have a home; they won't attach themselves any more than a monkey to any living-place. When they do make habitations, they build little huts like bee-hives, semi-spherical in shape, about three or four feet in height, with a hole in front which is used as an entrance.

These huts are formed by thrusting the two ends of a cluster of canes or bamboos into the earth, and interweaving coarse grass. The hut has no furnishing, except a big bundle of leaves, which is used as a bed.

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Usually the huts are grouped in a little village of from six to twelve, ruled over by a head man, the only one who holds any authority over them.

Unlike the other African natives, the pygmy is a monogamist, to the extent, at least, of living with only one woman at a time. The parents are very fond of their children and give them every protection possible until the young ones are able to shift for themselves. Notwithstanding the parental affection, there seems to be no return on the part of the children, an unfilial characteristic shared with the monkeys.

They domesticate no animals of any kind and have no notion of agriculture. This is one of the reasons of their attachment to the Bantu tribes, for otherwise they would not get their favorite food, the banana. They think they have a right to anything that grows in the forest, but if a negro or another pygmy lays claim to anything they desire, they will not appropriate it without some return. They take what they want and give what they consider its equivalent in some other food.

Their method of exchange is really unique. When one wants a certain bunch of bananas from a plantation, he shoots an arrow into the cluster. This is a notification to the owner of the banana patch that the bunch must not be touched under pain of the inveterate enmity of the pygmy. When the bananas have reached the eatable stage, the dwarf climbs the stem and hacks off the coveted fruit. The next morning the owner finds in exchange, pinned to the stem from which the bunch was cut, a piece of meat neatly wrapped in banana leaves.

Without using a hook, they have become dexterous fishermen. They merely tie a piece of meat to a cord, made of a sinew or hair, which they drop into the water. When a fish bites, they whip it suddenly to the bank with a sleight of hand that would be a delight to Izaak Walton. They have no boats and rarely venture into the running streams. I have never known one who had learned to swim. They cross the streams by swinging monkey-like from vine to vine.

THE BEST HUNTERS IN THE CONGO FOREST

THE pygmy is the best hunter in the Congo forest. He kills birds and the smaller animals adroitly, searches out the stores of wild honey, and, if other food is lacking, he can make a meal of grubs plucked from the barks. What the dwarfs do not use, they barter with the natives for bananas. All their hunting is done with the arrow, spear and stone.

The bow is about two feet six inches in length, and the arrow two feet, without barbs or tip, merely a sharp-pointed, unfeathered stick in most instances. Their iron-pointed spears, from three to five feet in length, are bought from the negroes. They are the nimblest bowmen, I believe, in the world. I have seen one shoot at a mark twenty yards away, and before the first arrow had struck the target, there were two others in the air from the same bow. Their movements are so rapid that they baffle the eye. I have been informed by officers in the Congo stations that some of the pygmies poison their darts, but I have never seen any one suffer from blood poisoning after being wounded by one of their arrows.

With his primitive weapons, the pygmy will do as much execution as a white man with his cordite express or his automatic rifle. Eye, nerve, confidence and a thorough knowledge of animal habits are prime requisites for success in forest hunting. The implements of the chase are secondary.

When the dwarf resolves to hunt, he sets out to the haunts of his game and, climbing a tree, waits for it to pass beneath. When the animal is well placed for a shot, he attracts its attention by a sharp cry, and then tries to shoot his arrow into the eye of his quarry. The victim, half blind, remains within range long enough to permit the little hunter to shoot half a dozen arrows with the advantage of striking the vitals from above.

They also use stones of various sizes, throwing them accurately, or dropping them with stunning effect on the game. With the fall of the stone, the dwarf will spring down unhesitatingly to the side of any animal and give it a deadly thrust to the heart with his spear.

HUNTING WITH DWARFS FOR CANNIBALS

OF THE many and varied hunting experiences I have had on the great African continent, my adventures with the pygmies of Manyemaland were the most unusual. To range the forest with a big, powerful negro seems natural, but to hunt

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with a tiny man, whose fuzzy head comes only a little above one's elbow, has in it something uncanny.

The Manyema, the cannibal tribe after which the district is named, wanted flesh, and the pygmies attached to the tribe set off in search of elephants. One who had joined me as a guide wanted to accompany his fellow tribesmen, and I consented upon his promise to lead me to the hunting-ground to take part in the chase. Taking my Remington automatic and a bandoleer of cartridges, I followed my little servant through the black forest paths which had been used for centuries by the barefooted natives that inhabited the district.

After passing over foliage-hidden streams that harbored thousands of crocodiles and tearing through the dense, thorny undergrowth, scaring unseen monkeys and other animals as we advanced, we reached a part of the forest where the sunlight streamed through the leaves. For a moment, I thought we had come upon a troop of monkeys, for all around me in the sudden light I had entered, which half blinded me, stood bands of pygmies armed with bows and darts and spears. There was no excitement, hardly any conversation. My little servant spoke to them briefly and then turned to me and said that some scouts were out trying to locate a bull elephant who had recently left his spoor where we stood.

Soon afterward, coming through the trees with the swiftness of a flying monkey, but with the noiseless gliding of a snake, a little yellow man appeared. A few words and a sign, and in a flash the dwarfs were swarming up the trees, holding their weapons in their teeth. The next moment, they vanished through the leaves. I was left alone, and, having nothing else to do, picked a high tree as a lookout and climbed up to one of its top limbs. After a little time the unmistakable cry of a pygmy scout came through the forest.

I knew that game was sighted and that the hunt was on. A few minutes later a huge bull elephant came crashing through the bush. Around him like a swarm of wasps crowded a troop of pygmies, and running from tree to tree, along the entangled vines, the little men, monkey-like in their agility, kept level with their mammoth quarry. Yet there was no excitement and no shouting. To the pygmies, the chase was an every-day pursuit.

When the elephant got near the tree on which I was perched, he turned to the left. The pygmies who were running along the vines above the ground showered darts at his head, many of them taking effect. With mighty trumps, the huge beast rushed hither and thither through the forest, wildly trampling and smashing everything in his way. When he again came under my tree, I saw that both of his eyes had been a target for the arrows, and he was blinded.

Wherever the helpless monster rushed for revenge or escape he was pelted by the stinging darts of the pygmies, until at last his huge body was studded with arrows standing out like the quills upon a fretful porcupine. The screams of the frantic brute rent the air, but the little huntsmen, different from any I had seen before, worked in determined silence, driving their weapons relentlessly into the quivering flesh of the huge beast.

Pitying the wretched animal, I raised my rifle to shoot. For the first time the pygmies spoke to one another, and three or four of them cried out to me sharply in anger, and I understood that they wanted to kill the elephant without my help. And I knew too much to deny them. For fully an hour the lumbering, pain-crazed, sightless brute struggled hopelessly on till, at last, weakened in his vain efforts to break through the entangled forest, he stood still and trembled.

Then the pygmies on the ground rushed up to the animal with leveled spears and thrust them into his sides. Those who could do so withdrew their weapons, leaving a jagged, bleeding wound. Spear after spear was driven into the elephant's body. Blood streamed from every opening, and soon he was swaying from side to side, his heavy trunk writhing like a wounded snake.

He was plainly in his last throes, and, as I looked, he was shaken by a great convulsion and fell heavily on his side. Before life was extinct, the little yellow men swarmed over his body and thrust their broad-bladed knives into the animal's vitals. With a groan, he died. His body was cut up and the flesh was carried to the Manyema and exchanged for future banana privileges. The tusks, which the little men do not make use of, were presented to me.

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A HAND-TO-HAND FIGHT WITH GORILLAS

SOME two months after this hunt, I witnessed what I should call a combat, rather than a chase. Being desirous of shooting a gorilla, I had wandered about the forest in hope of securing one. I came across many of the familiar trails that the gorilla leaves, and I was also informed by natives that some of these brutes were in the district. One day, while sitting on one of the vine bridges that the natives build over the streams, waiting for a possible sight of my game, I heard the peculiar *woa-woa* of the male gorilla, which was answered by a female from a distance. The animals, which were evidently searching for food, kept in constant communication with each other by their guttural calls. All at once I heard a cry of alarm from the female gorilla and, a few minutes later, she came bounding through the bush to her mate, whom I could hear coming in the opposite direction.

They met in an opening in the forest before me, and clasped each other with evident affection. I was about to raise my rifle and fire, when, in the line of the shot I intended to take, I saw a little man start up, so did not pull my trigger. A moment later the bushes in front of me seemed to spring into life, and from every side the little yellow forms of the pygmies appeared.

The gorillas stood in defiance, still and silent, until one of the dwarfs raised his bow and shot a dart which entered the thigh of the female. She gave a shrill cry of pain and the male, with a roar of anger, rushed toward the bowman. He stood his ground to the last instant, shooting darts as the gorilla advanced, every one of which hit, but none had the slightest effect in breaking the rush of the black, hairy monster.

Other pygmies attacked the female, who cried to her mate for help. Immediately he turned back toward her. One of the dwarfs was directly in his way. With a mighty bound the gorilla was upon him and, seizing the little man by the throat and thigh, upraised him for a moment and hurled him with stunning force to the ground. The pygmy did not move again. Many times I tried to aim my rifle, but I could have fired only at the risk of killing one of the little men, so I was forced to be a useless looker-on.

When the gorilla clutched the pygmy, half a dozen other dwarfs rushed on him with upraised spears. In the heat of the fight the female joined her mate. They stood back to back, surrounded by the fiendish little men, for whom, I must say, I was losing sympathy, so much courage did the huge apes show against such overwhelming odds. The fight was desperate. The pygmies kept charging with their spears at the gorillas, and falling back when the apes rushed in turn at the ring which encircled them. In spite of their agility, the little men often failed to elude the rush, and one after another was killed or knocked senseless with one blow from the mighty fists of the gorillas.

Yet, while pygmy after pygmy went down under the blows, the apes were continually gashed by the spears of the dwarfs. At last the female fell with a spear in her heart; the male, weakened with loss of blood, stood at bay over her, roaring fiercely. A pygmy, rasher than the rest, sprang at the animal's breast with a broad dagger in his hand. The brute clasped his arms around him fiercely and they staggered about in a death struggle, the gorilla trying to crush the man who was jabbing his dagger into his side.

Then the big ape tore the dwarf away and pitched him headlong to the ground. As the brute rushed to seize another, a path was opened through the ring, leaving me an open line, for the first time, for a shot. I fired and, with a bullet in his spine, the beast fell dead.

ATTACKED BY THE PYGMIES

NOTWITHSTANDING their courage the pygmies have many tricks that are cowardly from a European point of view. One of them nearly cost me my life. To the pygmy, all strangers are fair game, and any one passing through his country is likely to serve as a target. I was tramping along a forest path one day, when to my left I saw the bushes move.

Thinking perhaps a lion or a rhino was in front of me and about to charge, I covered the spot with my rifle. The next instant I felt a prick between my shoulders and, turning, I saw a pygmy vanish in the leaves. I put a shot after him, and as I did so I got another arrow in my back. Knowing I had no chance in the bush, I dropped my rifle and, drawing my felt hat down over my head for protection, I turned and ran, cry-

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ing for help from my caravan. Luckily the little men were not determined to kill me, or I would not be writing these lines.

When I reached my caravan, I took some of the troops and returned to the place where I was attacked. Slowly we crept along the path. As we approached the place where I dropped my rifle, the sounds of a lively argument reached our ears. A minute or two later we came into view of the pygmies quarreling over the rifle I had cast aside. As soon as they espied us they ran for cover and were lost to view in an instant. As I merely wanted to recover my weapon, we did not fire upon them. The darts that had struck my back had only pricked my skin, being stopped by the heavy webbing of my bandoleer.

The trick that was played upon me, although very effective, is very simple. The pygmy ties a string to a bush across a frequented path, opposite which he stands about thirty feet away, hidden in the thick leaves. When a stranger comes down the path, the pygmy pulls the cord, which shakes the bush and diverts attention in an opposite direction. As soon as the eye is attracted by the moving foliage, the pygmy fires his dart into his intended victim. He is nearly always successful, for, notwithstanding the traveler may be aware of the trick, he can never afford to ignore a moving bush, which might be the hiding-place of some animal watching to pounce upon him.

"HONEST EXCHANGE" FOR STOLEN BABIES

A PECULIAR practise, which shows the crude sense of honesty in the pygmies, came to my notice when I was living among them. One night a fierce storm swept over the forest, wrecking some of the native huts and forcing many of the negroes to take shelter in the uninjured dwellings. In front of the huts in the district there is a small veranda. This shelter was naturally used by the natives whose homes were ruined by the storm. The pygmies who had attached themselves to the tribe, instead of crowding in with the big negroes, vanished into the darkness. The women of the village on such nights as these kept a sharp watch over their children, for the pygmies were wont to creep into the huts and steal the babies. When I first heard of this practise, I was reminded of the tales I had read as a child of the gnomes and fairies who stole children and left queer changelings in their places.

Nevertheless, as fairy-tales in books might turn to realities in the African forest, I was inclined to have some belief in the weird stories told of the pygmy kidnapers. A little before sunrise next morning, a strange wailing rose in the village. Women ran to and fro outside my hut, crying to one another in doleful tones. Calling my "boy," I asked the cause of the commotion.

"Akka steal baby," he said in Congo French.

"What for?" I asked.

"He likes baby of big people better than his own."

I jumped up and went out into the village square which was covered with a crowd of gesticulating women. In the center of the square, on some half-dried banana leaves, lay a tiny yellow baby, a little longer than a man's hand, unconscious of the trouble it was causing. Over it, frantically weeping, knelt a woman of the tribe calling on the Akka to bring back her baby.

Questioning the men of the village, who saw nothing unusual in the occurrence, they informed me that during the storm that had struck the village the night before, the woman who was weeping for her child was asleep beside the infant under the veranda of one of the huts. When she awoke, she found her own child gone, and that a pygmy mite had been substituted.

"Why not recover it?" I asked.

"Impossible," said the natives. "The pygmies will carry it into our enemy's country where they will be safe, and we can not pursue them."

"Does this child-stealing often happen?" I asked.

"Every time the pygmies get an opportunity."

I observed that there were a number of pygmies in the village who did not consider themselves a part of the pygmies of the forest, and even denied any kinship, although it was evident from their appearance. These people, I learned, were all substituted in their infancy for the stolen children of the negroes.

Among the pygmies were to be found, also, some normal negroes, with no trace of the dwarf in their make-up, living like the dwarfs and claiming relationship with them. These people, no doubt, were the children

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stolen from the villagers. I questioned a pygmy a little over four feet in height, who claimed to be the father of a man five feet ten, why he had stolen a negro baby. He would not admit the theft, but asked me why I was so unintelligent as to say theft, when I knew that something was always given in exchange. The pygmies, you will see, are an honest folk, according to their lights.

During my stay at this village, I saw another curious practise. One day while I was in conversation with the chief, a slave came up and informed him that the Akka had brought in a prisoner and wanted to exchange her for banana privileges. I accompanied the chief to the outskirts of the village, where a young negro woman, whose hands were tied behind her, was held by a pygmy at each end of a rope passing around her neck. In the woman's breast and legs there were arrow wounds, showing how she had been captured.

Notwithstanding the fact that she was going to be sold as a slave, she showed apparently no concern. She told me that she was a Mauvis and that, while collecting nuts in the forest, the pygmies had set upon her and carried her off. She looked on her condition as natural and seemed even to enjoy the flattery of the pygmies putting up her value in bananas and bargaining for five more bunches when they got the offer of ten. All tribes except the one to which a group of dwarfs has attached itself, and all strangers entering their territory, are classed with the game of the forest by the little people, and anything that they can use or offer for barter makes good hunting.

The Tall Man From the West

by Charles Edward Daniell

"THEY say he's the slickest yegg west of the Rockies," announced the Chief with a touch of admiration, "and I guess they're right, Coogan. He's put twelve big jobs across in the past six months, and they haven't so much as got his finger-prints. He's an artist, all right, if he does come from Wyoming."

Coogan, the detective, removed his cigar thoughtfully, and his big blue eyes fixed meditatively on the speaker's.

"Two thousand reward, hey? Well, Chief, it sounds gosh awful good, but——"

"It's two thousand, remember, if you get the diamonds, but they'll pay a thousand more for his capture," corrected the other. "You've got his description, haven't you?"

"Sure," Coogan rose to his feet. "I'd know him quick enough. But he can stay as close as a bug's ear here in Big Town if he plays his cards right." He leaned his brawny figure against the roll-top desk, and a smile played on his wide, good-natured features. "Two thousand to pinch a quick-change artist from Wyoming with seventy

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thousand dollars' worth of diamonds on him," he mused. "We'll get the drag-net out in two twos, Chief. I'd like to meet this feller—this 'Duke.'"

"Another thing," cautioned the other, "keep an eye on the steamers. If this cowboy yegg is the man they say he is he'll jump the pond with those sparklers. D'ye understand?"

The detective nodded.

"Sure. I'll have a barbed wire fence round every dock in the water-front in four hours' time, Chief, and if I can get a line on him I'll land his lordship in the Tombs in forty-eight," remarked Coogan confidently, and passed out.

IT WAS an hour before midnight by the greasy clock that hung over the bar in McPhee's unsavory saloon on First Avenue. Dan, the bartender, a thick-set bullet-headed product of the East side, was busily engaged in serving "Suds" and a villainous decoction that went for whisky to a rough, ill-conditioned group.

A fly-specked lithograph of the district leader tacked up against the wall over the bar, beneath which an array of dirty bottles and glassware banked up grimily, gazed complacently down through clouds of fetid pipe smoke. Coarse language and inconsequential argument were in noisy evidence, and amid the uproar a voice in threatening tones would now and again foreshadow the blow almost sure to follow.

At such crises the undershot jaw of the bartender would set like a steel trap, as he gripped his loaded billy; and the "speak easy" that opened into the rear room beyond the bar would inevitably disclose the pointed chin and crafty gray eyes of "Spider" Mullins, the "Ferret."

"They're a windy bunch of rousterbouts," he observed sneeringly to his friend, "Reddy" Burns, as he gazed through the aperture. "There ain't fifteen cents in the whole push."

THE words were scarcely uttered before the door was flung wide open, and a large, broad-shouldered man surged into the saloon and stood viewing the rabble with a thoughtful, curious stare. He wore a soft Stetson pulled low on his forehead, and something in his breezy, careless air proclaimed a familiarity with environments less congested and restrained than New York. For a moment he surveyed the crowd with a cool, half-contemptuous glance from his blue-gray eyes. Then, moving to a vacant place at the lower end of the bar, he pushed up his hat and exposed features tanned as brown as an Indian's.

The Ferret closed the sliding door of the "speak easy" very gently and glued one eye to a crack in the partition. The stranger's assured attitude, with a hint of defiance, seemed to spell money to his imaginative mind, and when he saw the big man produce a large roll of bills to meet his payment for a drink, a significant smile overspread his lean countenance. He slipped over to the door and, entering the saloon with a casual air, pushed up to the bar beside this glaring prospect. The newcomer shot him a sharp, appraising glance.

"Well, pardner," he said good-naturedly, as his eyes settled indulgently on the slim little figure, "I'd like to bet two bits to a red apple you ain't president of the First National Bank."

Spider grinned sheepishly.

"You'd win the dough all right, mister," he replied, sipping a small glass of beer. "Wish I was."

"I reckon so. Live round here?"

The Ferret nodded. "Sure."

The questioner turned a scrutinizing gaze on his nondescript acquaintance and appeared to be weighing him meditatively.

"Reckon you've got your eye-teeth cut, too, or I'm no judge."

Spider smirked and cocked up a quizzical eye.

"On to all the moves on the checkerboard round here, hey? All the cops and detectives, too, I reckon," he continued insinuatingly.

This remark brought a quick, startled glance from the Ferret. Then he dropped his eyes demurely.

"Sure thing. That's easy, boss."

The big man laughed.

"I thought so," he observed, confidently, and, beckoning to the bartender, ordered a dollar's worth of cigars.

"What's the matter with sitting down somewhere, pardner?" he suggested. "Maybe you can make a dollar out of me. I'm easy money to-night. I reckon, now, you wouldn't turn a little bunch of greenbacks down if it came your way, would you?" he inquired with a searching look.

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Spider leered into his beer glass, twirling it thoughtfully.

"What kind er dope yer tryin' to hand me out, mister?" he questioned, raising his eyes suspiciously.

The newcomer indicated a small table at the side of the barroom.

"Come over here," he said, "and I'll put you on. It won't take me long to get it off my chest, I reckon."

THEY seated themselves, and the stranger leaned forward, peering at his companion under his eyebrows.

"You wouldn't travel nearly three thousand miles, I reckon, just to get some feller's hide, hey?" he began in tones almost challenging. "Well, that's me. My name's Foley. Any one out in Arizona'll tell you all about Tom Foley. I run a dinky little gold-mine out there—the Red Rattler—and it rattles right along to the tune of twenty thousand a month, so I didn't come East just looking for money. I've got money enough," he nodded defiantly. "Money to burn, and money to shoot jack-rabbits with, but what I'm after is, getting square. D'ye understand?"

"Sure. I know," agreed Spider sympathetically. "You want ter get some feller's goat."

"That's right. And I'm going to get it, too," declared the Westerner. "But it'll be on the level, y'understand. Now listen: there's a party in this town that double-crossed me for thirty thousand with not so much as a fare-ye-well. Did me dirt, and the lawyers can't touch him with a forty-rod pole. He's covered himself up so you couldn't get enough out of him to fill a hollow tooth, and all the time he's got plenty of money. He just sits tight and gives Tom Foley the merry ha! ha!" He banged the table emphatically with his fist. "But Tom Foley's going to deal him an Arizona hand to-night and get that money, d'ye see?"

The Ferret's eyes glittered as he nodded approvingly.

"Sure, boss. But say," he inquired doubtfully, "how yer goin' ter get next ter the guy?"

The gold-miner nodded his head meaningly.

"Don't worry about that. I'll get next to him and the money, too," he assured. "Yes, and some might call it burglary. I call it getting my own back again. But it ain't the money so much," he protested. "It's getting square with that coyote, d'ye see? I'd give a hundred thousand to do him out of that thirty he welched me for. But I need help and that's why I'm talking to you. I reckon I sized you up about right to help me turn this trick. I'll pay you big money to stand by me."

Spider swallowed hard and the blood surged into his cheeks.

"Gee!" he exclaimed excitedly. "How much will yer pay, mister?"

The gold-miner shook his head impatiently.

"That don't cut any ice with me," he retorted with a careless air. "I'd just as soon give five thousand as I would one thousand if we could get a hook into that greaser. Money's no object with me. I'm looking for a show-down." He pulled out his wad and thumped the table with it by way of emphasis.

His companion's eyes fairly bulged. He moistened his lips nervously.

"But I'm thinking," he continued, "that to do the job right we need more help. D'ye reckon, now, you could get a couple of good fellers to join us?"

Spider sprang to his feet:

"Sure. There's two friends of mine inside here right now——"

The Westerner rose and placed a restraining hand on the Ferret's arm.

"That's the stuff!" he said; "you fix it up with your friends and meet me here at midnight. Tell 'em they'll be well paid for their trouble. And here, pardner," he tore a five-dollar bill off his roll, "you freeze on to that till some more comes your way, and just tell those boys I'll use 'em right. I'll meet you again in half an hour," and he passed out.

FOR a moment, Spider stood transfixed with astonishment, clutching the five-dollar bill. Then he burst excitedly into the rear room.

"Reddy" Burns and Big Pete the "Strong Arm," were anchored to a moist, beer-stained table nursing the memory of a late grievance, and the Ferret's precipitate entrance was hardly calculated to soothe their ill humor. Violently startled, they both landed electrically on their feet, glaring ferociously.

"Aw, say—" Reddy shot a forbidding lower jaw under Spider's nose—"I'd like to

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punch the—— Aw say, what's the matter?"

"Yes, yer crazy yap, an' fer two cents I'd give yer somethin' to keep yer from jumpin' round like pop-corn!" yelled Big Pete. "What's the matter with yer, anyway?"

Spider dropped into a chair and began to laugh softly to himself, his head in his hands. His companions glowered at him maliciously.

"Well, cough it up, Monkey-face. I s'pose it's some soft frame-up that lands the whole bunch in the growler. Sure. That's your graft," observed Burns venomously.

"'Tis, huh?" exclaimed Spider, springing to his feet. "Well, what d'ye call that—what?" He flourished the five-dollar bill triumphantly. "Five bones a guy in the barroom just passed me. Yes, right in there," he glared disdainfully. "A gold-miner from out West, seven foot tall with dough to chuck at the birds. And he's goin' to pay me five thousand to help him——"

Big Pete broke into a satirical guffaw. Reddy's lip curled sneeringly.

"Say, Ferret, it's you for Blackwell's lonesome ward," he girded, tapping his head significantly. "Crazy Ike Stratton ain't got anythin' on you."

"What d'ye want ter be lying to yer friends for, you little jumpin'-jack?" snapped the Strong Arm. "Who did yer pinch it off'n?"

"Ain't I trying to tell yer? He's a big gink that walks in here half an hour ago with a roll on him the size of—of yer leg, Pete. Sure and bigger," stammered Spider, with imaginative enthusiasm.

Then, pacing the floor agitatedly, he related the story of Tom Foley in a burst of vernacular that lost nothing in the telling.

His auditors listened sullenly, now and again interjecting a sneer. Finally, Spider finished and, dropping into a chair, remarked that, "the Tapioca would be back in half an hour and he'd show them."

"Say, Pinhead," cried Reddy Burns, leaning across the table leeringly, "yer don't suck in all that hot air now, do yer—huh? Honest, if yer head *is* filled with punk yer can get wise to the bloke's spiel, can't yer? He ain't no gold-miner. Take it from me, he's some fly yegg, or it's a frame-up."

"Yegg nothin'," scoffed the Ferret. "Don't yer s'pose I can pipe a yegg off?"

"Naw, yer couldn't," jeered Big Pete. "Yer couldn't tell a police percession from a panhandlers' if they didn't wear signs. G'wan! It's the bughouse fer yours, Gooseneck. Yer nut's got wrinkles——"

HE STOPPED suddenly, for the door swung open and the Westerner loomed into the room. Instinctively, they all scrambled to their feet. Of commanding presence, there was something of latent mastery in the personality, in the tall figure, the strong contour of the face, the alert eyes, and rough, hairy hands, that compelled respect. Spider's companions gazed at the man with undisguised astonishment.

"Well," he began with an inquiring look at the Ferret, "what do the boys say, pardner? These are your friends, I reckon," he moved toward the table and addressed them. "My name's Foley—Tom Foley of Arizona. I told pardner to give you the facts about what I want. The job I'm on to-night is to get the skin of a snake that's done me dirt—see? That's all. But I'll pay good money for a little help just the same." He turned to Spider and told him to order drinks and cigars, then seated himself. "What d'ye say, boys?" he questioned briskly.

Reddy Burns gave the speaker a stare of mingled curiosity and respect. "Suits me all right if it's on the level, mister," he replied. "Spider's given us the spiel, but yer can't tell nothin' about him," he nodded at the latter deprecatingly. "Spider always sees double."

The Ferret flushed with anger, and started to reply, but Big Pete interposed.

"What's in it, boss?" he asked respectfully. "Peanut-top here said somethin' about five thousand."

The Arizonian leaned across the table and told the story again in lengthy detail.

"Now that's all there is to it, boys," he concluded. "I want that skunk's hide, and I'm going to get it. Money's no object. If I get the money I'll divide a bundle of it between you; don't worry about that. Here," he said, pulling out his roll and tearing off some bills, "here's twenty dollars apiece as a starter. How's that?"

The conspirators beamed and pocketed the money. Spider flashed exultant.

"How about it, now?" he jeered. "Ferret's bughouse, huh?"

"Don't you get excited, pardner,"

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laughed the miner. "There ain't any flies on you that ain't paying rent, and if we get that rattlesnake's skin to-night, you'll be wearing diamonds, hey?" He patted Spider approvingly on the shoulder, then turned to the others. "Come on, boys," he said pleasantly; "I reckon we better get a start now," and so, trooping out through McPhee's groggery, they emerged on First Avenue and passed up that thoroughfare toward the north as the clocks were striking midnight.

II

THE Westerner led the procession with his rangy stride, and Spider, pegging along on his right, was taxed to keep pace with him. Over his shoulder, and in quiet tones the big man explained the situation to Reddy Burns and Big Pete as they walked along, ceasing to speak as they passed a pedestrian and resuming again in a low voice, till at Fourteenth Street his confederates had a fairly comprehensive idea of the work in hand.

A large, old-fashioned house on the corner of Second Avenue and one of the cross streets appeared to be their ultimate destination. Here it was that this "Fatty" Sheridan—as the gold-miner named him—was stopping with an old friend who, it happened fortunately, was out of town at this time, and it was into this house that the man from Arizona proposed to effect an entrance. Turning off the thoroughfare they were moving briskly along Second Avenue when Spider suddenly sucked in his breath and whispered hoarsely over his shoulder.

"Cheese it, Reddy! Look across the street. There's Coogan!"

A large man could be seen on the opposite sidewalk heading in the other direction at a lively gait.

"Sure. Say, an' he's pushin' along for fair! Hope he keeps on a-goin', the big carrot-top," observed Burns uncharitably, peering in the direction.

"Ye'll never shake that red-headed four-flusher till ye're nailed in a pine box, believe me," growled the Strong Arm. "You can't lose him."

"Who's Coogan?" inquired the miner casually.

"Headquarters man — detective," informed the Ferret. "He's a wise guy, too. We got ter dodge him, boss."

Mr. Foley drew his little company into the deep shadow of a doorway.

"We'll wait here just a minute and look the ground over," he cautioned. "That's the house over there," he pointed diagonally across the Avenue at a large old-fashioned mansion of other days, looming somber and gray in the dim uncertain light. "There's a yard at the back with a high fence around it. "We'll get in that way."

Reddy gave him a suspicious glance and was about to remonstrate, but, recalling the money in his pocket, remained silent.

"How yer goin' ter get in?" inquired the Strong Arm.

The Westerner smiled significantly as he drew a key from his pocket.

"I reckon we'll just walk in the back door like we owned the place," he replied coolly, exhibiting the key. "I had it made yesterday, and it works like grease." He pulled out his watch. "Half-past twelve," he observed meditatively. "We might as well go over now. And to think that 'Fatty' Sheridan is sprawling in bed over in that house," he gloated; "and his old friend, Tom Foley, is going to get Fatty's goat in half an hour!"

"Is he a big, strong gink?" whispered Spider, with a touch of apprehension.

"Who, Fatty? Pooh! I reckon I could break Fatty over one knee," replied the big man disparagingly, "but there ain't going to be any fighting though, y'understand. Most I want you boys for is to keep a lookout. I'll handle Fatty. I'll double him up like a feather pillow if he don't give up those scads."

THIS time they scattered their forces. Spider was to act as scout—scale the back fence, and open the door in the wall while the others reached the point by separate and circuitous routes. In a few moments the little figure stood gazing helplessly up at the coping of the dingy brick barrier, and it was not until his disgruntled employer appeared and boosted him over that they entered an antiquated garden of overgrown, blackened shrubbery and weather-beaten fruit-trees.

"He's the only friend Fatty's got left in the world, I reckon," whispered the miner. "All the rest have turned him down. No one lives here except them—family's all dead and gone. This feller lets

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Fatty have a room. I wouldn't wonder if he was as mean a skunk as Fatty."

A soft tap on the door in the wall announced the arrival of the others. The Westerner beckoned them inside and, guiding them quietly to the back door, whispered his orders.

"You stand guard here," he directed Big Pete, "and keep a watch out. The two others go up with me. There won't be any trouble, though," he added assuringly.

The Strong Arm nodded assent. The miner fitted the key softly in the lock of the door. With a gentle push it swung open and they stepped noiselessly inside, Spider following closely at the big man's heels, and Reddy bringing up the rear. A short flight of steps led them to a bare back entry from which they emerged upon a broad carpeted hall in the main body of the house. At the foot of the wide staircase they paused to catch the least sound from above. The Arizonian produced a small pocket lamp and handed it to Spider.

"You work the light, pardner," he whispered, and turning to Reddy handed him a loaded leather billy. "Don't use it unless I get cornered," he cautioned with his lips to the other's ear. "You probably won't need it."

The interior of the house was like a tomb. A damp musty odor of decaying and moldering material struck the nostrils offensively, and the boarded windows sealed the place up as black as a pocket. Hearing no sound, they began to ascend the stairs cautiously—creeping along the side of the wall to avoid creaking treads. Half-way, they suddenly paused, holding their breath, for a wailing moan broke the silence. Then, they continued to mount noiselessly till they reached the landing.

The leader ordered them in a whisper to stay where they were while he located the quarry, and slipped off softly in the darkness. Reddy, clutching his billy, pressed his mouth to Spider's ear.

"Say, Top, I got a chill down me back. It's a frame-up."

"Naw, it ain't," reassured the Ferret. "The guy's on the level. Gee, but I wish't it was over!"

The leader was back in a moment with the news that there were undoubtedly two men in the house.

"Somebody is sleeping in each of the front rooms," he explained under his breath. "It's Fatty's friend, I reckon. I thought he was out of town. You boys wait here," he directed. "I'm going after the other man."

He moved silently down the stairs. Reddy turned to Spider in a paroxysm of fear and distrust.

"Say, that guy's crooked, Ferret! He's goin' ter put the hook inter us. I'm goin' ter beat it!"

"What yer want ter get scared for?" breathed Spider reprovingly. "I tell yer he's on the level. Say, Reddy, what's the matter with pinchin' somethin' while we wait, huh?" he proposed brightly. "I got the light here."

5

WITHOUT waiting for a reply, Spider crept like a cat across the broad hall and, entering an open door, flashed his light around a large, square room. It was evidently used for lounging or smoking, but had every appearance of a neglected museum.

A heavy table stood in the center on which were a collection of pipes and ash-trays. The walls were hung with antique weapons, and near a shuttered window stood a cabinet containing a quantity of foreign curiosities and geological specimens displayed under glass. Behind it, against the wall, was draped a priest's robe richly embroidered with gold thread. It caught Spider's eye.

"Gee, Reddy!" he whispered tensely. "Get on ter the classy ulster," he threw his light across its surface and over the cabinet, and they both fell feverishly to work filling their pockets with the first things that came to hand.

"I'm goin' to pinch the swell wrapper too," Spider breathed excitedly, pulling the priest's robe down. "It's a peach. Old Sol Goldstein'll go into his jeans ter get that—what?" He began hurriedly rolling it into a bundle.

"Drop it, yer crazy yap!" snarled Burns, busily pocketing copper quartz specimens. "Yer can't get away with that. Cheese it, he's comin' now!"

"Sure I can," assured Spider, tucking it under his coat.

Then the two marauders straightened up stiffly alert, as they listened to a slight noise that sounded like the creak of a door at the front of the house. Breathlessly they both moved toward the door.

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But as they advanced in the pitchy blackness, Reddy's hand struck an ash-tray that bounded and shrilled on the table surface like a twanging harp-string. A light step followed in the outer hall. Instantly they both dodged behind the door, and the next moment a tall and very thin man with white attenuated features stood on the threshold, a pistol in one hand and a lighted match above his head.

He threw a searching glance about the apartment and as his eye fell on the cabinet he started perceptibly, and was about to advance when a dull, muffled thud came from the front of the house—the sound of a body falling heavily to the floor, which was followed by a chorus of loud threats and curses. Then resounding feet were heard ascending the stairs two at a time, and Spider in a frenzy of terror rushed from behind the door to meet in violent contact the tall man making a swift dash for the window.

The two bodies came together in the dark with the sudden impact of colliding football players, the Ferret still clutching a corner of the dragging priest's robe. His opponent's feet became tangled in the latter and, swaying helplessly, he fell, striking his head on the corner of the table, and rolled over on his back insensible, Spider on top of him.

THREE men burst through the doorway, and the next moment the room was flooded with light. A big, broad-shouldered individual with a thick shock of red hair stood gazing gravely down at the human pig pile on the floor.

"For the love of heaven!" he exclaimed, "it's that rat-faced little divil Spider! What yer doin' round here, yer limb of Satan?"

He dropped on one knee and regarded the stricken man critically.

The Ferret sprang to his feet and began vigorously whipping his clothes. His face expressed every shade of dejected gloom.

"I believe you've killed the man," declared Coogan, straightening up. "Here, Flynn, help get him over on that couch there," he ordered, "and then go for a doctor. And you, Cassidy, get some water and bathe his head. I believe the little crimp's murdered him. How'd yer do it, huh?" he demanded savagely.

Spider blinked, and pulled his mouth corners down with an aggrieved expression.

"'Twa'n't my fault," he moaned. "The guy run inter me in the dark."

Coogan glared.

"What yer doin' in here, anyway?" His eyes raced around the room with a puzzled look.

"A bloke named Foley hired us to help him—" began Spider, but Reddy, appearing suddenly from behind the door, interrupted:

"That's right, Mr. Coogan," he asserted. "'Tain't no fault of Spider's or mine. He said he was a gold-miner out in Arizona, and was sore on this here party——"

The detective broke in impatiently:

"D'ye know who that man is over there?" he yelled, then turned to face a smiling figure that suddenly appeared in the doorway.

"I reckon it's kind of up to me to explain about this," drawled the Westerner, nodding at the two suspects. "The boys are all right, though. I heard your name just now. Mr. Coogan, the detective, isn't it?"

"Right," assured the latter shortly, with a sharp glance at the speaker. "Who are you?"

The miner laughed pleasantly.

"Why, my name's Foley," he answered genially. "Tom Foley of Wyoming, and I've come on to look after my injured friend over there on the couch. When I struck the town I found I needed help, and, not wanting to bother the police, I just hired pardner here, and his friends, to sort of substitute for 'em, d'ye see, and give me a lift. And I reckon we've done the trick too, hey, pardner?" He winked meaningly at Spider, who stood sourly regarding him in blank amazement. "A right slick little citizen, pardner is," he observed, nodding knowingly at the detective. "Pardner was the one that really landed him, you know—landed on top of him," he laughed uproariously.

Coogan scowled and flushed hotly.

"I suppose you know that this is the 'Duke,' that——"

"Certain sure, Mr. Coogan," affirmed the other complacently. "My old friend 'Fatty' Sheridan's going to pay me two thousand for getting the 'Duke' and the diamonds. 'Fatty's' our wealthiest cattleman in Cheyenne, you know. And I," his eye roved beamingly over the faces of his listeners, "I'm Tom Foley, the sheriff."

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The Marriage of Kettle

by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne

CHAPTER XXXVI

CAPTAIN KETTLE TO THE RESCUE

THE way that Berber Kaid was thrown to the ground surprised him. He was clutched by iron hands, shaken with a tigerish ferocity and strength, plucked from his feet and thrown sprawling as though he had been as inanimate as a pillow. The sailor stood over him with uplifted gun-butt: "I'll teach you to lay your sacrilegious hands on Miss Dubbs, you brown-bearded son of an unqualified pastry-cook! You'll apologize to her here and now for what you've said and done, or I'll smash your worthless head like a rotten eggshell, and glad of the chance!"

Captain Kettle's eyes blazed, and certainly the Kaid was cowed by his terrific shaking.

"I offered to make her my queen, and that, I take it, is no insult. But if my wooing was too rough for the lady's taste, then for this I do apologize."

"I call that half-hearted. Miss Dubbs, you needn't accept it unless you choose. Besides, I don't know how deep his insults have gone. Say the word, and I'll kill him."

"Thank you, Captain, he did propose, and I refused, and—well, that's over, and we'll say no more about it. But I'm glad you came. I don't know what I should have done without you. Oh, Captain, take me away from this! Take me back to your ship!"

"Certainly, Miss Dubbs, certainly I will. There, don't you fret any further, and if you feel a little trembly, please sit down on this sofa and presently it will pass away. Try a drop out of this bottle. It's Horner's Perfect Cure, and you will find that it meets your case. And as for you, Mr. Bergash, if you attempt to stir from that floor till I'm ready for you, I'll put you to sleep permanently! So chew on that, you dog! Now tell me, where are my owner and his sister."

"In their rooms."

"Free and at liberty?"

"Yes," said the Kaid.

"No," said Miss Dubbs.

Captain Kettle's boot shot out and crashed into the Kaid's ribs with a regular Cape Horn mate's kick. "Lie to me, you swine, and I'll stove in every slat in your body! Where are their rooms?"

"Below. I suppose you would call it in the basement. They got troublesome and I had to put them somewhere where they couldn't create a disturbance. It was for their own good. If my people here had gathered that Chesterman was shouting threats and insults at me, they'd have killed him and his sister out of hand. I can't get them to understand that I'm looked upon as a holy man, and the people here would consider it a mere act of piety to knock on the head anybody that annoyed me."

"Holy man! You! I'll handle you before your people in a way I wouldn't handle a yellow dog, if you give me trouble. Let me see if you are armed"—the little sailorman ran a skilled hand over the Kaid's clothing—"apparently not. Left your Hopkins Allen in the next room before you came along here to insult a defenseless lady, through fear, I suppose, that she'd pull it and use it on you? Well, I've that gun in my pocket, and another to match it. Miss Dubbs, my dear, might I trouble you to carry this Winchester rifle? If anybody annoys you, if you'll kindly poke this small end up against their clothes and pull this trigger here, I'll be obliged to you. And now, Mr. Bergash, on to your feet! Smartly there! Attention! You are to stand exactly still till you're given my permission to move.

"If you want the girl, and she wants you,

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take her and go. I'll surely not stop you."

"Say 'sir' when you address me! And don't speak till you're spoken to. By James! you've got to learn respect, and you'll find the lessons rough if I have to give them to you. Don't slouch like that! Stand erect, you swine! Heels together. And clasp your hands behind the back of your neck. Now then, you're to lead, when I give the word, to the place where Sir George and Miss Violet are jailed. If there are any unpleasant incidents by the way you can rest assured that they will end fatally for you. I shall not shoot you dead. I shall plug you through the liver—just—there—d'you feel? And if that won't make you run straight, I'll attend to you some more. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are the passages to this strong-room lighted?"

"They are."

Captain Kettle's foot shot out. "They are—what?"

"They are, sir."

"You're improving. Now let me warn you not to get tempted to slip off into any nice, quiet, gloomy corner. I've got eyes like a cat for the dark, and I'll shoot you, if you try any other game—before you have time to think. Quite understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"There's just one thing more. If you meet any of your friends on the way and the nature of the procession isn't clear to them, I leave you to make the necessary explanations. And look here, my lad, you may not have heard me talk in the tongues of this part of the world, but I'm a seafaring officer, and I can tell you I've a working knowledge of more languages than you ever heard of. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, quick, march! Miss Dubbs, I ask your pardon for walking in front of you, but, for the moment, it seems necessary. You needn't carry your finger on that trigger whilst you're walking. Rest it on the trigger-guard—yes, like that—and then it will slip handily on to the place when it's wanted. That rifle pulls off a trifle easily. Go steady, Bergash. This is the rogue's goose-step you're giving us, not a foot-race."

Mohammed Bergash, Cambridge graduate, Kaid of the Western Atlas Berbers, and Saint of the stock of the Prophet, was cowed. Up till now he had seen in Captain Kettle the somewhat acid shipmaster and the creature of a whimsical owner; but of a sudden he recognized in him the incarnation of energy, and, if need be, tragedy. He fully grasped that Kettle would, if occasion demanded it, shoot him with as little compunction as he, Sidi Mohammed Bergash, would order the extinction of an inconvenient tribesman, and, in spite of himself, he was mastered. The Kaid was no coward. In the ordinary tribal fighting with the Moroccan Moors he had stared death in the face a dozen times before, without awe and without tremor. But this was somehow different; the threat of death was a minor item; it was the sailor's tremendous personality that made his spirit bend.

He walked ahead as a docile guide. Twice, in the wandering alleys of the house, he met members of his household, and dismissed them elsewhere with a word; and finally, "That is the door, sir," he said. "May I drop one hand from my neck to open it?"

"Yes," snapped Captain Kettle, "open the door, hook up your hand again, and then march inside ahead of us."

In this ungracious procession, then, Captain Kettle once more came into the society of his owner and his owner's sister, and Sir George Chesterman, on his part could not have been more surprised if the Emperor of China had walked in to pay an evening's call.

Miss Chesterman, it was clear, was on the verge of a demonstration. The affair, it is true, had gone further than she ever intended; she had, in fact, been horribly frightened (and with very good cause); but her passion for Captain Kettle was still hot, and she had it in her to have thrown wild arms of gratitude round his neck, and hailed him as her world and her preserver.

But the sight of that acid little precise man, with the red torpedo beard, had a damping effect on hysterics, and something she caught in the eye of her fellow woman clinched her self-restraint. Miss Dubbs might be in mortal danger, but to her employer's shrewd vision she was glorious with triumph.

"Sir," said Captain Kettle to Sir George, "I gather that this swine of a Saint has been misbehaving himself. That being the case, I take it you will not care to stay longer under his roof."

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Sir George Chesterman laughed ruefully. "So great is my distaste for his hospitality that I'd give all I possess to be back once more amongst the friendly cockroaches on the *Wongaroo*. But I suppose one might as well wish to be in the moon. How in the world did you get here, skipper?"

"Walked, sir. It struck me that I might be useful to you (as owner) so I came. I propose we ride back, and that is a thing this man, Bergash, is going to arrange, if you will authorize him to do so. But before letting him do that, I want to know if you have any complaints to make that you would like me to take payment for out of his skin."

"I will cancel everything for a free passage to the sea."

"And you, Miss?"

"No, no! Only get me away."

"Right, Miss. Then if you, sir, and your sister, and Miss Dubbs, will kindly make the most of this uncomfortable room for the next ten minutes, I will take Bergash outside again and have a little heart-to-heart talk with him over certain arrangements for the comfort of all of us. You have the Winchester. I'll leave you also this Hopkins Allen, which I find too straight in the stock for my particular brand of fancy shooting."

CHAPTER XXXVII

A CHARGE OF CAVALRY

THE one and only gateway to the Bergash fortress, as I have recorded above, was just wide enough for the passage of a fat cow. The middle of the arch is higher to-day than the original architect intended, because in the course of centuries the humps of passing camels have worn a central gutter out of the hard limestone. The wall at that point is fourteen feet thick, of solid masonry, and above the gateway are the usual conveniences for pouring boiling lead on unwelcome callers.

There were iron spikes on the top of the wall above the gate, and through many centuries these had been decorated with the heads of the Kaid's enemies—the old heads being replaced from time to time by those of more recent cropping. But when the latest Saint returned from the lands of the infidel with a rabbitskin B. A. hood in his saddle-bags, and a certain impatience for conservative customs, he had ordered the last selection of heads to be thrown away, and since then had not renewed them.

All places have their customs, and though the reasons for many of them have been wiped away during the passage of years, the customs remain. In the Bergash fortress it was a habit when you were going abroad to bedeck your camel with all his elaborate furniture in the street outside your own front door. When it was all nicely in position you marched off to the one entrance gate of the fortress, stripped your beast to the bare hair (or mangy skin), squeezed him out through the doorway, and carried the trappings through the hole in the wall yourself. Afterwards you reassembled your ship of the desert and his furniture on the narrow causeway outside.

That was all excessively inconvenient, of course, and, when there was a rush on, dangerous. Camels, and loads, and even passengers, have many a time been levered over the edges of the causeway and crashed down a good ninety feet on to the rocks below when the brutes really began to snarl and wrestle.

But there was probably some very good reason for the custom in the past, though that reason is quite forgotten now. Anyway, it is worthy of record that the latest Kaid, Sidi Mohammed, was within an ace of losing his valued life by being carried over the causeway edge by a rearing camel, and Captain Kettle saved him by shooting the brute in mid-air, and lugging his holiness off its back just as he was in the very act and article of toppling off to destruction below.

"I have to thank you for my neck. I very nearly provided my countrymen with a new Saint, and left them without a successor."

"Say 'sir' when you address me," said Kettle ungraciously, "and order out another deck-house and a camel that's been properly broken. And tell your groom to jump lively."

The Kaid gave sharp orders in Berber, and his men flew to carry them out. "You make things very awkward for me, sir," he said rather querulously. "I tell you that only our women-folk and babes and wounded men, travel in these deck-houses, as you are pleased to call them. A man looks ridiculous in our eyes in such a conveyance."

"You will look ridiculous in anything I please. You say wounded men travel in

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them; you'll qualify as one of those if I have much more of your lip. Here's the order of the march: a covered camel carrying the two ladies; then Sir George on that horse which is trying to kick him off and can't; with you and me on another covered camel bringing up the rear."

"Very good, sir. I may point out that if we don't have my usual escort it's about a pound to a brick we get mopped up by some of those enterprising coast tribes which you disbelieve in, but which I have before had the honor of telling you have paid a good many attentions to you and the *Norman Towers* already."

Captain Kettle winced. The Kaid's words had a way of coming true.

"Very well," he consented; "order up your men to fall in behind. Only remember that if they play games, you'll be the first to pay."

To give the Berbers their due, there was no southern dilatoriness about them. Moors or Arabs of the desert would have taken half a day to get that *douar* under weigh; these men had the beasts on the move across the causeway inside the half-hour.

Kettle and his prisoner sat in seats slung on either side of their camel, and were jolted violently forward and aft by reason of the gait that amiable quadruped assumes even on level ground; and when they began to descend the slopes of the mountains, Kettle, who was new to it, thought he would be burst asunder. Every bone and sinew seemed about to part.

The Kaid watched him for some miles with malicious amusement, and then twitched up his own clothes and showed the ordinary camel-driver's belt.

"I should like to suggest, sir," said he, "that you take this strip of cloth (which, as you may see, is designed for the purpose) and bind yourself round like this. If you don't you will probably come to pieces, and remain so for the rest of your natural career."

"Thank you," said Kettle and followed out the expert's suggestion, marveling the while that it should have been made. "Probably to lull my suspicions," he told himself promptly, "so that he can get the drop on me and put his ugly fingers once more on the owner and the ladies." And he watched his blue-eyed fellow passenger with extreme narrowness.

THE camels set the pace at a steady three-and-a-half miles an hour, up hill and down dale, no more no less. They swung on, remorseless as destiny, and the cavalry escort jingled in their wake. They journeyed on throughout the cool night, taking a far shorter route than the circuitous one by which Kettle had traveled, and when day began to show in the higher layers of the atmosphere, they were already among the lower slopes of the foothills.

"I don't know whether you are asleep, sir," said the Kaid.

"I'm not."

"Then perhaps you are a little dull in your hearing. But there's pretty heavy firing ahead of us."

"Are you sure it isn't the surf on the beach and on those reefs?"

"There is that as well. But there's firing, all right. You know I'm used to picking up these sounds."

"You're right; you've good ears. I suppose it means that your men are attacking my steamboat. Well, McTodd will attend to them efficiently. But, by James! I can't afford to miss more of the scrap. Here, you, tell your drivers to hurry these camels."

The Saint called an order. "By the way," he added, "I don't know if you still go on the simple principle of disbelieving everything I say. But if you don't, I may mention that the people who are kicking up a row ahead aren't my men at all."

"Then who are they?"

"The same crew who've been worrying you all along. They live on the coast here. There are Moors among them, and men from the Sus tribes, and Arabs of the deserts to the south, with a few Twaracks thrown in, and perhaps here and there a Berber who has been chucked out of my place for misbehavior. They're a mongrel lot, very hard and very savage and very dangerous, and, I'm sure you'll learn it with satisfaction—they'd just as soon cut my throat as yours."

"I hear you say it."

The Saint turned to face his persecutor, and placed a lean small hand on the camel's hump which throbbed and wavered between them. "Look here, Captain Kettle; you've hated me pretty tenderly since the first moment of our meeting, and I'm free to own I've detested you quite as much. But for the time being I want to propose a truce."

"I don't see cause for it."

"Man, hear sense! I don't care two

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straws whether you are killed in the next half-hour, or whether you are not. I don't care much if I am knocked on the head myself. But for the women I do care. I am—no, I won't put it that way. We both of us are very fond of one of them, and the fate of women who get into the hands of those howling devils down there is too awful to think about. With my escort to help, we may get through, though I admit it's a thinnish chance. But if you insist on keeping me cooped up in this cubby-hole, the escort will begin to inquire directly why I'm here. You see, being rather a dissatisfied person I've got a reputation of being in the thick of it when there's a skirmish going, and their curiosity on the matter will be natural enough. When they do begin to put in their questions I suppose you'll shoot me out of hand and proceed to enjoy yourself among the escort. Well, that would be all very interesting as a side issue, but it doesn't strike me as the best way of looking after the ladies' interests."

"Or Sir George's," Kettle admitted. "And he's my owner. By James! it strikes me I've come very near to neglecting duty."

It was a bitter pill to have a home truth like this thrown against him by Sidi Bergash. But Captain Kettle always had an exact sense of fairness. He thought a moment, and then he held out a hand. "I thank you, Mr. Bergash," he said simply, "for reminding me of what's my duty. May I ask if you're open to accepting employment?"

THE Berber Chief saw the point and laughed. "As commander of your escort? I'll take it. My people have been mercenary soldiers off and on for some three thousand years and more, and although this will be my first bit of hired service, there is no reason why I should kick at the tribal custom. The only thing left to settle is, I think, the pay. We mercenaries guarantee fidelity, of course, as long as the pay suits us and is forthcoming regularly. But when that stops, why then we hold ourselves free to chop round and serve under another flag."

"Pay?" repeated Captain Kettle, and pulled vexedly at his red torpedo beard.

"Why not? You serve Sir George for pay yourself, I suppose?"

"I do. But you! You quite took me in with your tales of gold-dust and the rest of it. I never dreamed you were out for your ten or fourteen pounds a month."

Again the Kaid laughed. "Pardon me, but your ideas are so eminently British. You think that hard cash is the cure and pay for everything. Why, throughout all my people's soldiering, through all the centuries, I never heard they served for money. Some of them—the slingers especially—like the men of the Balearic Islands—took wine and women for their pay; others asked for ornaments for their friends at home; and some went as mercenaries for the sheer sport of the thing. But for myself"—the blue eyes looked keenly—"would it surprise you to hear that I am like an Islander of the Balearics?"

"Yes," said Kettle with a happy flash of memory. "They fought for a fee of women and wine, but also they fought naked. Now you are clothed; you've been to college at Cambridge; and you aren't going to bargain like a native savage."

"*Touché*," said the Kaid, throwing up a slim finger to his head-rope.

"And, curse your impudence! there's my Winchester to beat time with. Here, make this earthquake of a camel heave-to, and let's taste God's air again from the top of horses. I'm choked in this blanket-topped hansom. Now you've remembered you're a white man the thing's all simple, and why you couldn't have done it before, and saved me all this bother and language, beats me."

"A man must be a fool sometimes, I suppose," said the Kaid shortly, "and the other was my day. Take this black horse; he's my own, and you'll like him. I'll ride that bay. If it comes to a charge I need hardly say don't go at it hell for leather. We've got to keep back to camel's pace. Ah, good morning, Chesterman. Captain Kettle and I have both come to the conclusion that we've been behaving like a pair of idiots, and so we've arranged to ride level through what's ahead. I'm sure you'll be delighted to join and give your old yeomanry tricks a chance."

"Hum," said Sir George who was feeling sore.

"I'll ride ahead if you like," said the Saint, "and you can shoot me in the back if I still look doubtful."

The big man shrugged the shoulders inside his loose, untidy coat. "If I trust a man at all, I trust him right through. If the skipper says you're all right, that'll do for

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me. What's that ahead? A cavalry flanking party, by Jove!"

The Kaid gave a sharp order, and the escort cantered up and formed round the camels. There were twenty-five of them all told, so that the *douar*, with camel-drivers and British, numbered in all some five-and-thirty souls.

"Why are they wearing respirators?"

"Twaracks," said the Kaid shortly. "By your leave I'll just try an experiment." He put thin fingers between his bearded lips and blew a high-pitched whistle. It squealed out into the night, two long blasts and a short, all on the same note; and then after a pause he blew two short blasts and a long, half a tone lower.

The squadron leader of the Twaracks threw up a long-barreled gun and his men halted. The Saint wheeled his bay clear of the others, so that he was a plain mark to see, or be shot at. The squadron leader of the black troop gazed a moment, acknowledged the other with a gun-wave, then wheeled his horse and galloped back into the shadows by the way he had come, with his horsemen thudding at his heels.

"Friend of yours?" asked Captain Kettle.

"Nothing of the sort. Didn't I tell you he was a masked Twarack? He's a pirate of the desert out yonder to the south and east, and I guess he'd come in here to raid the raiders who appear to be raiding your steamer. Let's hope he'll continue to do it."

"You seemed to know his helm signals."

"Precisely. And may I suggest, my good sir, that you don't know all the international codes? You Europeans are in the very infancy of long distance signaling. And even when we others in Africa show you how to do the trick, you don't seem able to learn. By Jove! look out now! Here's the real thing."

A HOWLING mob in white billowy draperies poured out from behind a shoulder of the sandhills, and the night kindled and roared with the discharge of their guns. But the range was too far for the inaccurate muzzle-loaders to be effective, and barring a camel slightly hit (it was not that which carried the ladies) no damage was done. The damaged camel was allowed to drop behind, and the others were flogged and dagger-pricked into something nearly approaching speed. The enemy were hard at work reloading, but charging and priming a musket of true Moroccan build is a work of art and time, and before more than a dozen of the weapons could be hurriedly squibbed off against them, Captain Kettle, the Saint and Sir George Chesterman, riding abreast, smashed down into the middle of them.

Each did terrible work with his own weapon. Sir George had borrowed a mace (that might well have been carried in the Crusades) from one of the escort, and acted and felt, to use his own subsequent expression, like a butcher gone mad. The Saint, with reins loose, and steering the bay with his knees, used both hands to the Winchester and did not miss a shot, although he opened fire thirty yards away from the line.

But Captain Kettle, who rode that ramping black stallion as a sailor rides, kept his head in this his first cavalry charge, and did more damage than any of them. He was conscious enough of his bad horsemanship not to risk fancy shots. He chose his man with deliberate aim, and did not pull the trigger till his revolver's muzzle rested on the victim's clothes. Nothing but this desperation could have saved him from being killed. The mongrel crew along the beach were every man of them as brave as he, but when they saw his pistol-muzzle set fire to *jellab* after *jellab* they called one to another that Shaitan rode on the Sidi's bridle hand, and that it was time to be gone.

The attackers broke through, rallied, and charged back again toward the rising dawn. The camels, with legs flying to all the compass points, sprawled along in their midst, and the deckhouses on their backs lurched and pitched like mark buoys in a tideway. But no sturdy wall of raiders waited for them this time. They drove their horses through the skirts of a rout, and clubbed and stabbed and slashed at white-winged fugitives.

"Pull up," bawled Kettle. "and let the rest go. Slow down, Sir George. Halt, there, you Son-of-a-Saint, and give me a chance with this devil-possessed black horse of yours. He's worried two men with his teeth and he'll eat you next if you don't get out of range. By James! do you spawn of the mountains hear me? Halt! Halt where you are! And now wheel. Wheel back to the lagoon or I'll turn loose this horse at you. Sir George, I'm the last man to spoil a fight when one offers, but we've the ladies with us, and presently, if you

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hammer them any more, these jokers in the white nightgowns will remember they're quite eight to one, and they'll turn and eat us without salt. Sir, shake yourself together and think of your sister, and, anyway, give me that —— club. Give it to me, I say—I'm sorry if I've hurt your wrist, but you've offered obedience, and it's my habit to see that orders are carried out. Saint, I've reloaded my gun, and if you don't whistle your men off riding their horses over those fellows on the ground, by the living James! I'll empty six saddles!"

"Perhaps we've done enough," gasped the burly Sir George.

"They've put up a good fight, sir," said Captain Owen Kettle, "and they've got their gruel, and my orders are that the thing finishes there. Away we go for the beach now, and get the ladies out of that earthquake they've been forced to ride on this last half-hour. You'll please to remember that they've missed all the fun and only had the shaking, and I'm afraid we shall find them in baddish preservation."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SALVAGED

DAY was lit by his time and the chill had slipped away, and the air was already beginning to warm up toward that baking temperature on which the edge of the Sahara rests so much of its evil reputation.

The battle had been fought in a valley of the dunes, and the vanquished tribesmen had scattered away in the direction of their villages, north, south and east. To the west, over a low line of hummocks, lay the lagoon.

"Shall we find the *Wongaroo* still there?" wondered the Kaid.

"Don't know," said Sir George. "These gentry may have captured her, or at least driven her away to sea."

"She'll be there, and untaken," said Captain Kettle shortly. "I left McTodd in charge, sir, and though he may have failings, and be argumentative when he's near drink, when it comes to looking after the interests of the owner who pays him, Mr. McTodd is as efficient as the King of England."

But in spite of these confident words, anxiety presently crept into Captain Kettle's eyes. "We should have raised her mast-trucks before this above those sand-hills," he told himself. And presently, when he could hold in his patience no longer, he clapped the sharp heels of his stirrup-irons into the ribs of the black stallion and galloped to the crest. The lagoon lay clear before him, with the spouting reefs and islets at its farther side. The anchorage was deserted.

"My great James!" muttered Captain Kettle, "where's my ship, and what do I do next?"

But even as he stood there, a stiff little mounted figure standing out clearly against the farther dunes, he had been seen by some sharp observer, and after a preliminary huskiness the deep boom of the *Wongaroo's* enormous siren hummed through the air, away on his left hand.

He turned sharply. Yes, there she was, the little beauty, down at the other end of the lagoon, close, in fact, to the *Norman Towers*. But in the name of wonder what was this? Foam bubbled from her tail and lay round her in a hoary ring. Her engines were running, and yet she did not appear to move. Aground? No chance of it. He had sounded every bit of the lagoon at that end, and was prepared to swear before a Board of Trade inquiry that she had at that very moment ten fathoms of water under her bottom.

He forced the black horse down the slope, and then galloped south along the hard beach, waving the others to follow him.

Half a mile farther on, when he had got the steamboats clear of each other, he saw why the *Wongaroo* did not move ahead. She was tethered by a heavy wire hawser. The other end of the wire, which was as taut as an iron bar, led in through one of the *Norman Towers'* hawse-pipes. Obviously she was trying to tow. Equally obviously she could not do it, and Captain Kettle cursed Mr. Neil Angus McTodd, unqualified Second Engineer and Acting-Captain of the *Wongaroo*, with maritime point and fluency.

"McTodd's polished his old coffee-mill of an engine till he thinks there's no limit to her power," Kettle told himself, "and now he's trying to pull a steamboat full of dead weight and anyway six times our size, through what practically amounts to a dock wall."

A moment later he pulled up sharply, and took a quick cross-bearing of the *Norman Towers's* foremast against a cleft in the chocolate-colored rock behind. "By the

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living James!" he cried, "he's budged her! She's moving ahead!"

The Berber Kaid pulled up alongside him. "I thought you and McTodd decided that the local ragamuffins built that ship up inside a coffer-dam that weighed about a million tons of solid stone?"

"I saw the stone myself," said Kettle shortly, and looked at his watch. "It's bang on the top of highwater this minute, and, now they've got a move on her, she's coming off like a bar pulled through a keg of tallow. Look at those links of cable hopping in through her port hawse-pipe. Mac's laid out an anchor ahead and he's heaving on that as well as with the old girl's own steam on her own windlass. You can see the leak of it now through the escape. Great James! why can't I find a boat?"

But the engineer in charge of the salvage operations was not the man to break off just then for the mere pleasure of being superseded by his superior officer. Mr. McTodd stood on the forecastle head of the *Norman Towers* enjoying himself hugely. He was wet through, and dripped brine as he stood; his overalls were smeared with every variety of sea impurity from black grease to the red rust of iron. There was seaweed in his beard, and an oozy red cut on the bridge of his nose. He exuded a mixed aroma of whisky, competency and authority, and from Trethewy the mate, on the *Wongaroo's* upper bridge, to the meanest no-nation deckhand awaiting orders on the *Norman Towers*, all within earshot were ready to jump to do his bidding.

INCH by inch, and then foot by foot the *Norman Towers* hove up to her anchor, and the windlass engines, which had strained hard to make a quarter of a turn at a time under an extra full head of steam, began to send up a steady rhythmical clatter and to make the deck beneath them buckle and shake.

"Go it, old girl!" said Mr. McTodd. "Gosh! but this is scraping the barnacles finely off your belly!" He raised his voice to a throaty bellow and hailed a cluster of men who lay behind a barricade of coal-bags on the poop. "Aft there, are you keeping a bright lookout? If another shot comes aboard from the shore without your shooting first, I'll baptize some more of ye with a three-quarter-inch spanner. Kindly remember I've no' put ye there just for decorative purposes, ye lop-eared aliens. D'ye hear me, you Schwereinsen?"

"Aye, aye, saire."

"I don't know who it was that was playing the devil's delight just now behind those sandhills," continued Mr. McTodd, this time to the undersized fireman who was attending to the windlass engines beside him, "but by the pleasure somebody seemed to be taking over the scrap, it seemed vara like as if our Old Man had scraped clear and was coming back here to stir up trouble. Gosh! I'd give a thumb to think yon was true."

"There's the skipper, sir, just rode up on a black 'orse to the top of that sand-'ill. Looks to me by the way 'e's a-shakin' 'is fist 'e's letting loose a mouthful of language."

"Bite off your tongue, you mutinous son of a Whitechapel tripe-hawker! Man, I've seen creatures more worthy than you fair smashed to a jelly for speaking so of the Lorrd's anointed. And anyway, abusing the skipper's an amusement I resairve for mysel'. Waving, is he? I'll let him wave his arrums from their socket and his whiplash of a tongue from its roots before I pleasure him by sending a boat that'll bring him off to interfere here. By gosh! this is my funeral, and no other corrpse need apply!"

And so, like another commanding officer before him, Mr. N. A. McTodd turned a blind eye to all shore signals till he had completed the work he had set his mind upon and saw the *Norman Towers* hung on to her anchor with clean, deep water all around her, and had cast off the heavy wire towing hawser from the *Wongaroo*, and bidden Trethewy drop his hook alongside. But when all this was completed he sent off a boat, and piously anticipated the enjoyment of seeing Kettle in a furious rage at having all the difficult work done for him.

But the small mariner read the scheme of Mr. McTodd's ambitions (as he and the others were rowed off) and with an effort pulled his temper into hand, and resolved not to allow himself to be drawn for the Scot's wicked gratification.

Instead, he stretched out a cordial hand. "Mac," he said, "it's clever of you. How in James did you manage to do it?"

The northerner's jaw dropped. He was losing the sport he had promised himself. "It looks as if I'd gone beyond your orders," he said pointedly.

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"I didn't leave you behind in charge because you were reliable," Kettle told him sharply, "but because you were the best I had."

"Man," retorted the Scot, "I kenned fine you undervalued me, and it's just that knowledge that's impelled me to miracles. Ye saw for yourself how impossible it was ever to get this rusted old cargo-box into deep water again, and here you now see it's been done. You, and the British Board of Trade, and a few others can never be convinced of my qualifications, and I'm put to this perpetual strain of performing miracles just for the sake of my ordinary professional credit."

"You've been drinking again, amongst other things."

"And for why not? Drinking, say you? Man, I tell you the Archbishop of York, yes, or even the Moderator of the Free Kirk of Scotland, would have lapped guid whisky, if he had had it, as a counter-irritant to the strain I've been put to. As a first example: how many of those ducks you left in my charge do ye think can swim?"

"I never took the census of them."

"Pairfectly. Weel, I did. It seemed (on inquiry) there were three who said they could, and twenty-three who couldn't. Man, you'll barely believe it, but I've taught twenty-two."

"Now, look here, Mac, pull yourself together and tell a straight tale. Twenty-three, you said a second before. Which is it? And, anyway, what has swimming to do with pulling the *Towers* out of that bay?"

"Man, dinna be offensive. Your nationality is against you, I ken fine, but fight against it, man, fight against it." Mr. McTodd shredded tobacco for his pipe, and scoured out an evil-smelling dottel into his hand. "Twenty-three, as I said, I tackled, and twenty-two I taught. The odd swimmer got mislaid, and whether the sharks got him, or cramp, or whether he started to swim back under water to Cardiff where he came from, and lost his course, I cannae tell you. Anyway, I was minus his services, and for that and no other reason I mourned his memory. But for the rest, I turned them into mermaids, and gosh! you should have seen some of them strip. They'd have made a sculptor faint. We got a fire in the donkey boiler on the *Towers*, and persuaded her number one winch to turn, and rigged a derrick. They'd a big iron tip-bucket in number three hold that they'd used for shipping that copper ore, and that with holes punched in was just the implement I wanted. Ye see the game?"

"Go on."

"I'll trouble you for a match."

"Here's my last. For the Lord's sake, go on."

"In due time," said the engineer, lighting his pipe, and speaking between sucks. "We lowered the bucket on to the top of the dam, and then divers had to fill it by hand with stones. I led them. Man, I lived under water like the King Neptune they tell of in the wind-jammer days, and those of the hands that didn't dive well or stay down the prescribed time, I beat over the head with rocks away down there under the surface of the sea. And you, who have been enjoying yourself on a circular tour round all the fashionable sights of the neighborhood come back and throw hints about the whisky! Man, in your ear, it's vara humorous; it was no' your whisky at all, or the ship's. It was from the owner's private sea store that he went away too rattled to leave locked. I ask you, how's that for humor?"

Sir George Chesterman had come into the Charthouse in time to hear this last. He laughed cheerfully. "That's all right, Mr. McTodd. The necessity of commandeering medical comforts in time of stress is recognized by Act of Parliament. Then did you and that splendid crew pull down that enormous embankment by hand, and in deep water?"

"Our policy," said the engineer, emphasizing his point with an explanatory pipe-stem, "was to cut a gap big enough for the steamboat to pass through at the top of flood. We'd no ambition, ye'll understand, for leaving pairmanent structural improvements to this part of Africa, and when we'd a bucketful of the stone hoisted above water level, we hooked it on to another derrick chain aft and dumped it over the stern. That was where trouble began with the natives. They seemed to object to our spoiling the contours of their dock."

"Have they been sniping you all along?"

"If the money those misguided heathen wasted on powder and slugs had been spent on whisky, and distributed in Glasgow, half of the second city in the Empire would have been happy for a day. And their firing, thanks to my ingenuity, was all wasted. It was vara humorous to see the way they went on bombarding the coal-bags I erected

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to shelter the men. We talked back at them, too, in a language they could understand. I let the watch on deck—I mean those that weren't engaged for the moment on the diving—take their rifles and loose off cartridges from behind coal-bags. I hear that some of them quite pride themselves on being marksmen, and that bald-headed old pirate with experience in the China Seas says he's a further bag of thirteen to his discredit. They shot at every native they could see. Man, it's laughable to think they bombarded the Saint's own messengers, and nearly lost us yon cargo of gold."

"Lost which?" Captain Kettle and Sir George Chesterman bounced in their chairs and put the question simultaneously.

"You need na' shout. Your nerves are suffering from drought, and as an expert I should recommend a lubricant. The Saint sent the gold to foot his bill, all right, and there was a message which said there was no hurry about the rifles, as you'd all be staying with him for some time."

CHAPTER XXXIX

THINGS LOOK BRIGHTER

SIR GEORGE and Captain Kettle glanced at each other. The same thought had flashed across each of them. Had Sidi Mohammed Bergash an idea that, with the gold once on board, the *Wongaroo* would vanish forthwith from his calculations? It was little he knew McTodd.

"I offered the messengers some slight refreshment," said the engineer, "and as they would na' take it owing to releegious scruples, I just swallowed it mysel' to prove to them the superiority of my own northern creed, and then I locked up the gold in a stateroom, and got on with my employment. But I'd an idea there might be mischief in the background, so I gave the old Chief a job. He's a very intelligent man, the chief engineer of the *Wongaroo*, if he's provided with ideas, and a working drawing, and has tools put into his hands just as they are required.

"What on earth are you maundering about now?"

"You ken yon brass signal-gun on the old *Towers* they bombarded us with as we came into the lagoon?"

"Yes, a useless toy."

"Aye, there speaks your layman's ignorance. Man, I gave our Chief the idea—it was a brilliant little thing of my own, but I'll not waste the details on your unmechanical intelligence—and he put a rifling into the barrel, and turned up some scrap brass we had into shells and fitted them with studs to correspond with the rifling. For want of a better explosive we filled the shells with water, and I tell you a fine din they made when they burst. She'll carry three-quarters of a mile, will that twopenny brass cannon in her new state, and one shell she threw landed amongst a committee meeting of True Believers and sent ten of them, there and then, to the place where they fry gratis. I watched it myself with the bridge binoculars. Gosh, you should have seen the old Chief! He'd let no one sairve the gun but himself. You may call him cynical, you may know him to be sarcastic, but my idea is that the world has mislaid in him a natural artilleryman."

The carpenter rapped smartly at the door, opened it, and waited to be spoken to.

"Yes?" said Captain Kettle.

"I've sounded the *Towers* in every hold, sir. She's tight everywhere. So are all the compartments of the double bottom that I could get at."

"Very good," said Kettle, and the carpenter went out. "And what's your idea of her engines, Mac?"

"Weel, I have na' had time to take a turn out of them, and there's no denying that outwardly they're disgraceful. Any engines with sea water on them and three months' neglect would be that. But with three days' labor, and some good nursing, I don't see they would be any worse than many of the marine engines that are now earning dividends all over the seas. Gosh! there's that noisy-minded steward ringing the thing he calls a gong for supper. It would mean a bath at least for me if I was to come down, so with leave I'll stay in comfort as I am, and have a snack on deck. And so, Captain, as I see you're aching to beautify yourself, I'll leave ye. Aboot that bottle of brilliantine I begged the loan of——"

"I have none," snapped Kettle.

"Weel," drawled the Scot, "I've no' used above the half of it," and, muttering to himself, "Vara humorous," he pulled himself up and rolled out of the chart-house.

"McTodd's a great taste for pulling your leg," said Sir George, as he followed more slowly.

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"At sea," retorted Captain Kettle sharply, "I don't appreciate it. My idea is, sir, that the engine-room should always give the deck officers proper respect. And by James, sir! if they don't know how, I'm the man to teach them!"

Captain Owen Kettle ripped off *jellab* and headrope and dropped them on the floor with a gesture of disgust. It is also on record that, punctual man though he is known to be, he was twenty minutes late when he sat down that night at the head of the table before the plate of tepid soup which the anxious steward had saved for him. But he was once more his spick and span self, and obviously pleased with the universe.

THEY had their after-dinner coffee out on deck under the wonderful African stars, and Captain Kettle found himself, by that lady's skilful management, seated apart from the other men, but near Miss Violet Chesterman. Her face was white and rather drawn, and there were heavy shadows under her eyes, all things that were easily accounted for by the recent distressing experiences she had undergone. But there was a brightness about her talk which showed that a high spirit still ran within her, and there was an indefinable something in her attitude that made the little sailor feel vaguely restive and uneasy.

She talked composedly over recent events —her own departure from the *Wongaroo*, which she frankly stigmatized as foolish, the arrival at the fortress, and her unexpected treatment there.

"I believe Sidi Bergash really believed I would marry him, though to give him his due he never did put it in so many words. But there is no doubt that both my brother and I were in extreme danger, and the way you got us out of his clutches is a thing that never can be properly rewarded." . . . And she said more, much more, in the same strain. It was flattering, it was fluent, yet somehow, without being able to find out any definite cause of offense, Kettle found that it all in a vague way jarred upon him. Up till now he had always enjoyed and indeed looked forward to Miss Chesterman's conversation, as of course she meant he should; and to-night's change disquieted him. For half an hour he listened there in the warm night under those southern stars without being able to define even to himself the subtle change that had come over her manner, but at last with a flash it dawned upon him. There was a taint of patronage over this talk to-night. It was intended that he should grasp that indiscretions in the past were indiscretions, and that she was the great lady, and that he was the hired mariner.

All Captain Kettle's rebellious nature leaped into arms at the discovery—and as promptly became limp and submissive. She had made a mistake; he had made a mistake; and if this was her way of putting things straight, he ought not to be the one to complain.

"And now," said she, "I must speak to you on a more intimate matter, and that is about your attachment to my maid—to Emily. My eyes have told me what your feelings are in the matter, and both my brother and I wish to see you comfortably settled down. So we have thought out what seems to us a suitable wedding-present, and my brother—ah, here's Rex, and there he is. George!"

"Yes, old girl. Having a talk with the skipper? Did you tell him our little scheme?"

"I left it to you."

"Well, Captain, it's this: In a moment of stress I told you I'd give everything I possessed in the world to be carried safely back on board here, and as you're the man who's done the magic trick, you are naturally entitled to the pay. Of course when it comes to the point I'm going to tell you I didn't really mean what I said, and all the rest of it, and so will you kindly waive the whole claim, and accept the *Norman Towers*, as she stands, in settlement?"

Captain Kettle swallowed hard. "I couldn't, sir, I really couldn't. I do appreciate your splendid generosity, but this is beyond all reason. Eight and a half per cent. is what you promised me, and that I'll take in all gratitude. But the whole—I couldn't. Why, ship and cargo together are worth £200,000!"

The big man put his hands in the pockets of his loose shooting-coat, and made a mocking bow. The big retriever opened a laughing mouth. "If I value my only sister at £150,000, which really seems an impertinently low figure, that only leaves £50,000 for myself, and in justice to my constituents I couldn't put it at less. But, skipper, I prefer not to look upon it in that light. I owe you a tremendous debt of gratitude that I can never repay. You are, I trust, going

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to marry Miss Dubbs, who is a girl I have a great liking for, and it will give me real pleasure if you will accept from my sister and myself a wedding-present which will, we believe, provide for you comfortably. You'll find papers in this envelope which will form an efficient transfer of the steamer from myself as full owner to you. And now, Violet, you're dead tired, and so am I. You'd much better go below and turn in. That's what I'm going to do myself. We'll see Captain Kettle at breakfast to-morrow morning."

AN HOUR later Mr. Forster, the elderly second mate, knocked at the chart-house door, opened, and went in. He stood for a moment, sniffing noisily at a smell of frangipani, and then looked heavily round the angle of the door. On the plush settee sat Captain Kettle and Miss Dubbs, her arm round his neck, his left arm round her trim waist, their right hands clasped, their lips together. They did not notice the intruder.

The second mate was a stupid man, and prided himself on his stupidity.

"Captain," he said. "Captain Kettle, sir, I've to report——"

"Get out!"

"To—to report that——"

"Get to blazes out of this, you blundering elephant, or I'll throw you into the ditch! What in thunder do you mean coming into my room unasked? Get out, you armor-plated idiot, and shut the door!"

Mr. Forster retreated slowly and heavily, shut the solid teak door to within five inches of the jamb, and fastened it there on the hook. Through the gap he stolidly completed his message:

"There's a ship's lifeboat rowing in here from the entrance of the lagoon. She's manned by white men. The moonlight shows them clearly."

"Callers at this time of night?" said Captain Kettle lightly, but within him he was conscious of a queer sinking feeling, and, as he confessed afterward, a premonition of disaster. But to his officer he added in his usual brisk tones: "Very good. You needn't report again unless they seem to want help, or till they come up alongside. Keep a bright lookout, however, and please remember I'm busy, and do not wish to be disturbed unless on important ship's business."

CHAPTER XL

THE SURVIVING FARNISH

"WE'LL have to be married in the Church of England," said the little sailor, "because that's the tightest way of getting the splice made, but after you're Mrs. Kettle, I take it, there'll be no more church for us, Miss Dubbs, dear."

"I suppose not, Captain darling, if you wish it," said that fine young woman rather wistfully. "But with this splendid fortune you've got, we could afford it, and there's no doubt about where the best people go to."

Captain Kettle went on, with the bright, fixed eye of a man who sees the dearest project of his life within reach. "I was brought up part Bible Christian, and part Methodist New Connection. I've had the advantage, also, of trying the Wesleyans, the Spiritualists, and the Plymouth Brethren, and I've seen good points in all of them. You hear that grand instrument, the harmonium, in all their chapels, and there's no doubt their people do stick together. But between ourselves they all seem to me, when you come to analyze them, to lack what I might call 'snap,' and they're certainly short on poetry.

"Now I believe that you and I, Miss Dubbs, dear, when you are Mrs. Kettle, can run a bran-new religion of our own, and derive much benefit. I don't believe (as many do) in starting in a seaport town, and getting big congregations straight away. I know you can do that. A fool of a sailor (when he's ashore) will go and listen to any old tale, especially if it's set to a hymn-tune. My idea is to set up in a country place, and the lonelier and more poetical the better. I want poetry in mine, and hills, and rocks, and the blue sky over all, and the tinkle of a river flowing fast. You've never been in Wharfedale, dear; you told me so. But I was there once for a week-end, and I thought that if ever I'd the chance I'd buy a farm there that I know of, and rent a small chapel that is to let near it. You don't know what poetry there is in sheep and cows till you've lived near them."

"No, dear, but I could learn, though privately I believe I should do best with hens. But I think the chapel's a splendid idea. Besides, that sort of thing has always what I call more pleasant interest in it than just gadding about to music-halls, which is what

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some girls like. It gives you a position at once, too, when you're known to be leader of the chapel set."

"It would be a splendid thing to be head of a religion of our own that was recognized by Whitaker's Almanack and all the great authorities. 'Particular Methodists,' I think, could be the name. 'Wharfedale Particular Methodists,' perhaps, to distinguish it from imitations. And I wouldn't take any convert that offered, either. I'd make it select—and strict. . . . And with money to back me up, unlimited money, as I suppose it will be when that copper ore's realized on, I could afford to run missionaries and send them out to the uttermost of the heathen whites—to Swansea, and to New York, to Cardiff, to Chicago and Glasgow, even, and perhaps Manchester and New Orleans. . . . Yes, what is it? Come in."

The heavy hand of the old second mate was beating against the door-panel. "It's that boat. She's alongside, and at the foot of the ladder. There's a party steering that looks like Noah, and as far as I understand his jibber, he says the *Norman Towers* is his. Am I to let him and his people on deck? They're the raggedest-looking crew of beach-combers I ever saw in all my going a-fishing. There's one of them seems to have gone clean loony. He's playing on the penny whistle. 'Spanish Ladies' is the tune. He looks as pleased as if it was Saturday night and he was sitting on his own forecastle-head."

Captain Kettle sighed heavily. "Miss Dubbs, dear, I've a bad feeling we've made those plans too soon."

"So have I. I feel as if Pa, or an angel or somebody has only to utter a spell like 'Time, gentlemen, please,' and we'd all wake up, and the money would be back in Sir George's pocket where it rightly belongs." She pressed the little sailor tightly to her ample bosom. "But sleeping or waking I've got you. You're real."

"I hope so," said Kettle miserably. "And now, my dear, if you'll excuse me, I must go."

Already the boat's crew had shipped their oars and made fast their painter, and the helmsman, a blowsy old man with untrimmed hair and burst carpet slippers, had swung himself heavily on to the ladder and was plodding up the side. His shoulders were humped with failure. The successful young shipmaster met him at the head of the gangway, as he tottered up the ladder.

"Come on board, my man, and let's see what we can do for you. I suppose it goes without saying you've met misfortune."

"Ay, you may call it that, Mr. Kettle, me man, or beg pardon, Captain Kettle as I see you are now by the stripes on your cuff. Terrible smart fellows for uniform, all you young officers nowadays."

"Who are you? By James! if poor old Captain Farnish weren't drowned and dead, I should say—— Here, man, just step over into the light!"

THE newcomer dried moist eyes with the back of his hand and laughed wearily. "It's a great mistake, a man not being drowned when drowned he's reported to be. We've found that a half a score of times when we've put in at places where there was a Consul and tried to raise a loan to victual the boat. 'I want to draw on my owners for a pound,' I'd say, 'to buy biscuit and a can of beef,' I'd tell him, and the Consul would prove to me from Lloyds' reports that old Captain Saturday Farnish was drowned along with all hands that sailed on the *Norman Towers*, and then he'd pump out unpleasant talk about swindlers and confidence men before all the loafers in the office till I'd be fit to die of shame. Oh, I tell you, Captain Kettle, me man, the life of a shipmaster when he's alive is a dog's life, but when he's officially supposed to be dead (as you may be some day) it's plain——."

Captain Kettle's mind flashed across to that comfortable woman in the bursting satins who lived in Merseyside Terrace, Birkenhead. "And you've never reported that you were alive?"

"I never had the heart to say the word, or a postage-stamp to send it with."

"Then Mother will have drawn your insurances?"

"There is none, Owen, me man. There's not a penny to-draw. I got a bit irregular about my payments, being forgetful, owing to attacks of malaria, and the insurance has lapsed. It'll have been workhouse for the old woman and the girls, unless she's got a bit of washing, or unless the firm's done something for them, which isn't likely." He rubbed his sea-chapped hands together, and sniffed hungrily. "There's a rare tasty smell coming from below somewhere. Must be cookie putting up a bit of a snack for the

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steward and himself before they turn in. D'you know, Owen, me man, an onion's a fruit I haven't tasted for six months, and for that matter I haven't seen meat half-a-dozen times."

"Come away below, Captain. Mr. Forster, send the boat's crew forward, and see them well attended to and fed, and serve them out a good stiff tot of grog. Come away below, Captain, at once. This lady is Miss Dubbs."

"You must pardon me, Miss," said the old man, "for being so upset at the idea of grub, but you see Chips—my carpenter, I should say—who was in the boat with me, was a heavy eater, and he provided the music, and it was the music alone that kept the men from turning down the job and stepping ashore and staying there whenever they got the chance. The Captain here, who's a musician himself, will tell you what Chips could do on the penny whistle."

"He could play," said the expert, "I'll admit that."

"He reminded me of that party in the poem that I've seen pictures of who played the penny whistle so well that he lured away the rats from a whole town full of fat old fellows who weren't at that time there seeing 'em. Lord, Captain, me man, fancy getting a knife and fork in one's fists, and sitting down before a plate on a table-cloth! No, steward, don't give me beef; I've not got my teeth on me this evening. Yes, some of that salmon. You've no idea how I've thirsted and hungered after some nice tinned salmon, Miss, since I've been threshing about in the murdering lifeboat. To my mind there's nothing so tasty in a hot climate as tinned salmon, unless perhaps it's finnan haddie, if you put enough vinegar on it just to damp the microbes."

The shaggy man sat at the end of the saloon table eating steadily, eating as man can eat only after he has lived for months on the edge of starvation, and Miss Dubbs and Captain Kettle leaned elbows on the table on either side of him and stared gloomily at each other and at him. Conversation came disjointedly, and between mouthfuls.

It appeared that when the cargo shifted in that gale six months ago, and the *Norman Towers* lay helpless on her beam ends with the wind howling over her, Captain Farnish decided that she would sink, but made up his mind to go down with her after the manner approved by his tribe. He was "old and useless." He would "never get another ship." He would be "far better off comfortably drowned." There were institutions which would "help the widow of a shipmaster lost at sea," whilst "no institution on earth except the workhouse would assist the wife of a disrated, out-of-work sea-captain."

But certain of the hands, impelled thereto by the musically-minded carpenter, lugged him with them into the boat and, once there, his old trick of seamanship saved the lot of them. "We old shellbacks can handle open boats in heavy weather in a way that would surprise you brass-bound swells of the newer school, Owen, me man—" They, too, saw the *Norman Towers*, instead of turning turtle, shake her cargo amidships again and blow off before the gale, and Farnish tried desperately to follow, but lost her in the raving sea smoke. But he was then, and later, bitten with the theory that she was either afloat somewhere, blowing about the seas, or neatly ashore and offering her cargo for salvage.

Thereafter his wanderings were worthy of Homeric verse. He was old, he was not too competent, he had no particular charm that I ever saw to attract men to him. He had neither money nor credit with which to buy provisions, and, on the rare occasions when he went ashore—in Las Palmas, at Mogador, at Bathurst, and in the Cape Verdes—he was received with derision and insult. It seems they lived for the most part on fish that they caught themselves when inshore and sun-dried as best they could for the blue-water sections of their cruise. As regards water, they risked their lives a score of times in running the crazy boat through the surf, when mad with thirst, to fill her beakers.

Why the crew stuck by him is one of those things that seem to be in the teeth of all reason. His one explanation, that they stayed for the mere pleasure of hearing the carpenter toot on the penny whistle, is ridiculous, but, frankly, I have nothing much better to offer. There was neither gain, pleasure nor advancement to dangle in front of the crew by way of lure, and, on the other hand, there was very certain starvation, hardship and danger to be earned in plenty. One can only conclude that for some obscure reason they must have loved

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the old man, and for that and no other possible cause they stuck to him.

IT MUST have been the most hopeless kind of chase. He was ignorant about the more modern niceties of currents, unsound on his trade-winds, hopelessly out of date on the theory of storms. His dumb rule-of-thumb science could not even form a theory as to where the ship had drifted to. But, from some obscure pricking of the thumbs, he had faith that she was either afloat, or neatly cast ashore, but, at any rate, waiting for him.

"I knew I should hit upon the old girl at last if only I could induce the hands to keep on long enough," said Captain Saturday Farnish. "Did you happen to find my old pipe in the chart-house by any chance, or had the niggers scoffed it? Chips lugged me away in such a hurry I hadn't time to slip it into my pocket. I should hate to lose that pipe. It's the one Mother gave me the year I earned all my bonus."

"I have it in my own chart-house, on top. There was Mother's photo, too. I took that, also."

Captain Kettle swallowed hard. Mention of that unclean meerschaum always upset him.

"You're a good lad, Owen, me man, and I'm glad it's you that's met with luck. You're young, and you've all the world before you, and now you needn't work. I'm old, and I'm out of date, and nobody wants me. Eh, well, I wonder when I shall eat onions and tinned salmon again? Never, probably."

"To-morrow, if you like," said Kettle.

"That's very good of you, Owen, me man. I suppose you'll give me a passage home? You'll find I'll not intrude. I am real glad that it's you that's picked up the old *Towers*, and made a fortune out of her, and —and——"

"And ruined you."

"Well, you didn't set out to do it, me man, and don't think I bear you malice; though, if it had been any one else, I should have been fit to tear his throat out. It's not for myself I care. It's poor Mother I'm thinking about. She's been the best possible wife to me. I—I did look forward to letting her have the balance of her days in comfort." The old man's unkempt gray beard drooped dejectedly on his chest.

The steward came up to Captain Kettle with a respectful whisper. "I've made ready for the Captain the room the African ladies had, sir, trusting that's your wish."

"Very good." Kettle put a hand on his guest's shoulder and shook him gently. "I think you had better turn in."

"Qui' ri', my dear, qui' ri', Mother. Had a mos' important business meeting—attend. You may put down that malacca in the hat-stand. Really no offense this time. Business negotiations entirely 'n your behalf, ol' lady; though unsuccessful, I'm sorry to say. Future's entirely hopeless. Help me to bed, Mother."

"Here, let me help," said Miss Dubbs with suspiciously shining eyes. "No, don't you bother, steward. The Captain and I can manage."

ONCE more they were in the chart-house, sitting side by side on the settee. Miss Dubbs stole out a sympathetic hand, and gripped Captain Kettle's with her very capable fingers. "It's been very hard for him poor old man, but we have to face these misfortunes."

"Yes," said Kettle, and drew his hand away.

"I suppose you'd like to do something for him?"

"Yes," said Kettle, and rested his red torpedo beard in the heel of his fist.

"It would be a charity if you did."

"No," said the little sailor, and stood briskly to his feet. "Miss," he said, "it'll be hard for you to understand, but that man's my old sea daddy. His wife was all the mother I ever knew. The pair of them brought me up, and a hard enough pinch it must have been, but when there wasn't enough to go round, they were the ones that went without. That happened more than once. There were times when employment was scarce, and they were nipped, Miss, badly nipped; but there was always tucker for me, and clothes, and school pence, and that's what I'm remembering now. When first I came to sea, Mrs. Farnish—I used to call her Mother, y'know, Miss—she said, 'You'll look after the old man, Owen,' and I said I would, and I've just got to.

"You see, Miss, she was all the mother I've ever known, and anyway I never went back on my word. I couldn't throw charity to Captain Farnish, Miss Dubbs. He's got to have his ship back, with all that's in her in the way of cargo, just as she was given to

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me by Sir George. And now, Miss Dubbs, dear, I know what you think, and you can say it presently. I know in my present state I'm no man for a splendid lady like you to marry, and so I want you please to consider our engagement at an end."

"You throw me off, do you, Captain?"

"If you put it that way."

"Then look here, young man, I'd sue you for breach of promise if you do, as sure as my name's Miss Dubbs. After all the trouble I've had to get the man I wanted, I don't lose him like that!"

"I'm just a pauper, and I don't think I'll ever be anything more. It will be work for mine all the days of my natural."

"Which is precisely what I looked forward to when I first permitted you to pay me attention at the Mason's Arms. I didn't mistake you for a bank manager in disguise, although you may have thought so."

The sailor clapped an enthusiastic arm round the lady's waist. "Miss Dubbs, my dearest, how splendid you are!"

"So that's all right," was her murmured retort. "You're mine, Captain, till death us do part, and don't you forget it. But it will be an upset for Sir George's plans."

"If you don't mind, we'll not tell Sir George. He doesn't know Captain Farnish, you see, and I should hate to have him think I was—well, you know what I mean. Time enough to transfer to the old man when we get home and the ore's realized on and the *Norman Towers* is sold. It's—by James! how dare you poke your unpleasant head in at my port-hole, Mr. McTodd?"

"Three o'clock in the morrning and the skipper courting his girrl. 'O silver moon and Afric's stars, you've much to answer for.' G. R. Tennyson wrote that, and I aye thought it one of his finest poems. Man, but flirting like this is a terrible example to some of the ship's company. Me, for instance."

"We're engaged!" snapped Kettle.

Mr. McTodd rubbed his chin and shut one eye. "Are ye telling me that as news?"

"It's the latest."

"Oh, vara humorous," said Mr. McTodd. "Puir young things, they've just discovered what this sma' worrld of shipboard has kenned since the day we first left Las Palmas. Miss, I kiss my hand to ye, and after I've been below to drink your health out of the Chief Engineer's whisky-bottle which is under his bunk, I'll go to my chest, and see if I cannae find a suitable wedding-present. But what I came to tell is this. That blue-eyed Saint has swum off to the shore. Do ye think that man's straight, or just an African? And then is he going to take delivery of those Winchester rifles he's already paid for?"

THE END

Knute Knudson—Navigator

by Mayn Clew Garnett

SO HE used to style himself, and his contempt for pilots, dockmen, tugmen, and the rest of the crowd employed by the great trans-atlantic company, was tremendous.

He met Johnson, the Sandy Hook pilot, off the lightship the first voyage he made as Captain in the huge *Nord Light*.

"Where is it, dat Ambrose Channel, hey, Mister Johnson? You take her in by dat cut, sir, to save time," he said.

"But it isn't deep enough for you yet, Captain, there's only twenty-nine feet at low water—you are drawing thirty. We'll go the old way and I'll show you the new cut the next voyage," said Johnson.

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"I deedn't ask you to show me anything. I know nodding of your cuts and your channels, sir. You take de ship to the dock, sir, I want to know noddings of mud-turtling. I am a navigator, sir. You take her the quickest way to dat dock. You take de bridge, sir," and Knudson's gold earrings shook with the volume of his pent-up emotions.

Knute Knudson wore earrings, and was as much like an old Viking in looks as any picture ever printed of those tough seamen. Six feet six he stood upon his bridge, his face large and rugged, his eyes small and gray, almost colorless—the eye of the seaman who sees farthest—and his great shaggy beard failed to hide his mighty jaw, which set with a snap as he gave his orders. He was a huge man.

He wore the company uniform under protest, and the peaked cap with the gold lace seemed out of place upon his shaggy head. Gold earrings of solid metal made into circles dangled from his ears and shook with the vibrations of his giant head. They gave him a savage appearance. Only seamen of the old school wore earrings, and they were an atavism of former savagery.

Knudson ascribed his keenness of vision to them. Without earrings in the ears the sight was never quite perfect. Such was the original training of seamen, and Knudson had all that was original about him. His iron fist, hardened by much toil in his younger days, had the half-curve of the wind-jammer, that partly closed look that tells of unending gripping upon cold, wet lines, or the burn of slipping dry ones. Yet few ever heard where Knudson learned seamanship.

Upon his certificate were the names of three Captains who, of course, vouched for him—his ability and experience; and his papers showed that he had spent twenty years in ships of more than five hundred tons, and in these both as sailor, mate and master. He was at least fifty-five, and he had gone to sea at twelve. There was a wide gap, a hiatus that he never covered, never alluded to. Jealous ones sneered, and hinted at a few years spent in the South Pacific when men-of-war were few and natives were plentiful on the big Eastern plantations where the Dutch held sway.

He had a deep resonant bellow, that even in its mildest moments could be heard the full length of the giant ship.

Even at the cabin table where he sat, his orders to his pet waiter rumbled deep and vibrating through the saloon. He never talked to his passengers. When they addressed him he answered politely, but with a certain finality of speech that left the originator of conversation perfectly satisfied to let whatever matter he had in hand drop. This was the man the Company put in command of their *Nord Light*, the twenty-five-knot ocean greyhound.

Knudson knew his responsibility.

Once he listened to the head of a large firm confiding his worries of responsibility to a friend.

"Why," said the president of the firm, "I have fifteen hundred employees at the works, and they bother about a two-cent raise in their pay. Their families write letters about high cost of living, terrible hardships, and I'm worried half to death. No one but a large manufacturer knows what trials a poor mortal has to face in this world!"

"——!" growled Knudson, "I haf on de average fifteen hundret a week to watch for; someting like von hundret und seventy-five tousand a year I takes under my arms, und I haf de half of dem seek, de oder haf mad, und some of de reast crazy, und I must feed dem, watch dem, dond let dem get loose in de ship! You know nodding of responsibility. You know nodding at all." The ominous shaking of the gold earrings told the president of that firm that further conversation was useless.

Knudson had been in command for two years before anything happened to call more than ordinary attention to him.

IT WAS in the Springtime, after the opera season, when the artists were going back to Europe—nearly all famous opera stars go to Europe—that Knudson happened to meet Mlle. Zeranga. This famous singer was accompanied by three others—two men and Mme. Tebara—all well known in grand opera, and by chance they felt inclined to sing at the Sunday services aboard the *Nord Light*. The hymn was the well-known one, and as they came to the line, "those in peril on the sea," the audience was astounded by the already great volume of sound being accelerated by the addition of a deep bass roar. Knudson had joined in, and his voice fairly drowned the rest.

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Mme. Tebara almost had hysterics, but her good breeding saved her. Mlle. Zeranga took pains to come up the bridge steps afterward in spite of the sign, "No Admittance," and congratulate the Captain upon the possession of such a voice. The Zeranga was not a timid little creature, being as she was of colossal build, standing six feet one inch and tipping the scales at something like two hundred and fifty pounds.

Knudson relaxed for once, and he invited the diva to the sacred precints of the navigator's room and pilot-house, where she was shown the intricate mechanism of the steering apparatus, and introduced to the chief officer. She did the unexpected by talking to the stolid quartermaster who was at the wheel, and who was so upset that he sent the liner five degrees off her course before he recovered. Mr. Swenson, the chief mate, marveled at his commander. Knudson had never before shown the slightest interest in the weaker sex.

"Und de pair of dem," said he to the second when he was relieved, "it vas goot for sore eyes. Dey looks like dey was made to order for each oder. Das vas a fine vomans, a beautiful vomans—und such a voice! I never heard nodding like it. It's no vunder, it's no vunder——"

In fact the pair were better matched physically than is usual. Both were of giant build, strong, full of life and feeling. The Zeranga was not quite thirty. Something in the great Dane attracted her. His uncouthness was apparently forgotten. His savage looks seemed to appeal to her. He was like some new character in a new opera, some savage Viking who would fit into the staging of one of Wagner's heavy masterpieces—and he was real! That was it. He was the real Knudson. And he took no pains to hide this from her. During the three remaining days of that voyage they were together constantly, in spite of the jibes and comments of the passengers.

Knudson had asked her to marry him.

If the giant's love feats were clumsy, they were none the less real. There was no bashfulness, no timidity about them. He seized the singer in his mighty arms and begged her to be his. They were alone in the chart-room, and the Zeranga saw there was no chance to make a scene, even if she saw fit to do so, which she did not.

After the first shock of that embrace she gave up and promised to give him an answer within a reasonable time. She would be going back again in three months. He must wait that long at least. The question of position was not discussed. It was set aside absolutely, as if there were no such thing to be considered in the mating of such as Knudson. She was rich. He was a rough, uncouth navigator, a sailor of oceans.

And he begged her in that deep, sonorous voice to go with him at once. He loved her—that was all. That was enough, he said, and his earrings shook with the passion of his being. She was affected, touched, and even the coldness of her professionalism was broken under that passionate appeal. She had had many love-affairs, both real and staged. Yet here was the real thing after all, the reality of life. Here was her mighty leader, her mighty lover in the reality. Yes, she would give him her answer within three months—that was more than she had ever done for mortal man before, and he must be satisfied with it. He held her closer and pressed kiss after kiss upon her lips—then let her go.

That was in the Springtime. Knudson was a very much subdued man for the next two months after the liner had docked from that voyage.

Swenson had seen the whole thing, wondered at it, and said nothing to any one except the second officer.

"Dere vill be a vedding soon," said he. "Yet dat vomans is much above our big Captain in station. I do not quite understand it—do you?"

The second officer did not. He was not much interested in what his superior was doing as long as that commander did not leave the ship. If there was to be a vacancy he would like to know beforehand, so he could get his uncle, the Baron von Schleimann, to work for the higher berth. It was time, anyhow, that he had a ship. He had served on the decks of six, covering a period of ten years. He was qualified to command.

II

TWO months passed, and the liner ran her trips across the western ocean with Knute Knudson on the bridge. He had grown silent lately. His big voice seldom roared out his commands. He spoke nearly always to his officers, who passed the word in more orderly fashion.

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Knute was becoming more and more civilized—or subdued.

Then came the letter he wanted, the note he waited for—his answer.

The singer would not be able to make the voyage at the time she intended. Numerous engagements—some of them at three thousand dollars a night—kept her from going to New York. She would, of course, come back at the beginning of the opera season, for in New York they paid her often five thousand dollars for a night's singing. She lingered with some emphasis upon this point. And, after all, was it right for her to think of marrying? Was not her profession more valuable to the race at large than the family she might found?

There was no hint of the fact that it was Knudson's poverty that stood in the way, but there was a strong suspicion running through the letter that there might be some mistake in attempting to live more than a week upon such a pittance as his. And she felt that Knudson would not consent to her remaining before the public should she marry.

Knute Knudson read the letter through and through several times. Then he knocked the quartermaster down who came to tell him the manager was waiting for him in the office on lower Broadway.

For this piece of surliness he was fined ten dollars and costs in the police court, which event tended to make him a little more like a maniac when he came back aboard. He shut himself in his room and gave way to the most bitter thoughts. Swenson kept out of his way, and the second officer took occasion to go ashore for a day or two. Then the ship cleared, and Knute went again upon her bridge.

During the months that followed this outburst there was little to note in the Captain's behavior. He was back again at his old habits, roaring out from the bridge-rail and swearing in a resonant yell at the tardy seamen who needed acceleration in movement. He ate as usual and seemed cheerful again, but Swenson noticed that there was a more than usual set to his jaw.

Knudson seemed to be studying some subject at times when he was supposed to be given entirely to the navigating of the liner. He would walk to and fro on the high flying-bridge when the chief officer was on watch, and mutter to himself. At these times Swenson found it difficult to engage his commander in conversation. Even questions relating to the ship had to be asked twice over before a growl or grunt could be forthcoming from the giant who strode back and forth gazing at the sea.

IT WAS November and the *Nord Light* was making her eastern run, when the wireless signals began to interest the commander. The other giant greyhound of the line was passing the Scilly Islands, and reported she was standing west in a smooth sea with her starboard turbine partly disabled. She was finding it difficult to steer properly, but would not put back as long as there was every prospect of her making her time within a day or two. She had many prominent passengers aboard who would be inconvenienced: a Japanese prince, a couple of bank presidents, and several opera singers of note, among whom was the famous Zeranga.

The report was handed to the Captain who had part of it—that relating to the passengers—pasted upon the bulletin-board. The rest was kept for the ship's private log. The company never advertised a mishap.

"What was the matter with her turbine?" growled Knudson to his chief mate.

"Don't know, sir, but if de blades strip, und dey sometimes do strip, den she slows dat engine," said Swenson.

"Did you ever try running her under one engine?" asked the Captain, knowing that his chief officer had served two years in the sister ship as second mate.

"Only once we strips blades, half of dem, den de starboard engine turns less dan two-fifty, while de port turns four hundert. It comes so hard on the wheel to hold her—und you wouldn't tink dat wid her length—dat de quadrant parted on de rudder-stock—took us two hours to fix her. She'll lose three knots."

"Well, she's off the Scillys now; it's nearly dark. We're five hundred and five miles west half south from them, heading youst to der southard of Bishop's Rock, und we make twenty-five miles every hour. If she makes twenty-three we sight her at quarter to five to-morrow morning. Call me in the morning watch, und don't forget it," said Knudson, his voice low and earnest.

Swenson wondered. He had never heard a commander figure out a position like that before. It was not customary. It was with-

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out precedent, and at sea everything must have precedent—that is, everything in ship's etiquette. It worried the mate to hear a man of Knudson's known ability telling him of a dead reckoning—a possible meeting—which, although correctly timed, was never spoken of, never discussed in ships in that loose manner. What had come over the Captain?

IN THE first watch after dinner that evening Swenson pondered at the peculiar behavior of his commander. He wondered whether the man were crazy over a woman of thirty.

Midnight still found Knute upon the bridge. He was walking to and fro athwartships, talking to himself, and his little earrings were shaking with emotion. Swenson left him at the beginning of the midnight watch and spoke to the second officer who relieved him.

"Watch the old man—he's nutty wid dat singing vomans who's in de *Antares*, bound west. Don't let de quartermaster swing her off a degree, or you'll hear of it. It's a shame, a big man like dat goes bug, dey calls it now, for vomans. Why, Nils, he's fifty and more, und tink of it, a navigator, a man what knows as much as he does going crazy—bug, dey calls it now—fer a vomans! Gott, I love vomans, too, but not like dat. Take care!"

The second officer was mounting the bridge steps, almost forgetting the orders in his haste to see what the trouble was about. When he arrived and passed the orders for the ship's course, wrote his orders down in the order-book, he slipped to the forward part of the bridge and kept his gaze upon the ocean, the distant horizon, never letting it for an instant wander to his commander. Knute walked regardless of him.

The ship was running rather light, carrying less than a thousand passengers, including immigrants returning to the old country. Her first-class list was very low, only twenty-four; her second cabin held but seventy-eight. She was fully coaled before leaving the United States, and she ran fast, with both her turbines running to their fullest capacity. Her starboard engines whirled a couple of revolutions more than her port, but there was nothing to impede her steering in the least.

The quartermaster at the steam gear had but to touch her and she responded like a small boat. Yet she was tearing through the night at railroad speed. Her younger officers watched her run and passed the speed to the bridge as twenty-five knots an hour during the first watch, and as the night wore on she was reported by the third officer as doing a full twenty-six.

By two o'clock the weather began to change. The giant ship running across a calm belt of ocean was poking her steel nose into a disturbance that was a few hundred miles in extent and which seemed to be following a northerly course, as the wind began to blow suddenly from the northeast. The stars had disappeared and a heavy dampness, drizzling in light squalls, broke upon the ship. The glass fell slowly.

Mr. Sims, the third officer, reported the fact of the falling glass, but Knudson rebuffed him with a growl.

"What do I care for a glass?" he snarled, in a voice that reached the deck below. "Does a little ship like this swing out from a low pressure, vot?"

A heavy swell rolled upon the port bow and the liner flung the foam in white storms from her high black steel sides. She rolled considerably, considering her great size, but she tore along with undiminished speed. At a quarter to five that morning Knudson was standing at the fore part of the flying-bridge peering through a hurricane into the blackness ahead.

The wind was blowing something like eighty miles an hour and the ship going more than twenty; the force upon him was that of a wind of more than a hundred miles an hour velocity. The chief officer, who had come up, was forced to hold on with both hands to keep from being blown bodily into the darkness to leeward. Swenson held on grimly and ducked his head to the fierce blast, unable to face it for an instant. His hands gripped the stout iron piping of the rail, and his oilskins pressed upon him, clinging like a skin. Under the vizor of his cap, jammed down with a chin-strap, he managed to get a partial lee, enough to breathe, but that was all.

The blast came now with greater frequency. The hurricane squalls roared with a deafening, booming note, and the flying water came in a solid mass against the bulkhead below him, the spray breaking into a driving smoke that choked and strangled with its rush. All forward of the giant ship was lost in a white smother. The seas

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broke upon her with a fury that shook even her ponderous bulk.

Sometimes the solid water tore across the deck and swamped everything, swirling, rushing and dashing into a mass of whiteness in the darkness of the night. Into this chaos of the elements Knudson drove his ship under full power. Twice the chief engineer called up to know if he should shut her down a little, that there was danger of the engines racing and carrying away something, but always Knudson roared back the same order, "Full speed ahead—drive her!"

THE Captain stood there with his feet braced wide apart, his huge figure leaning forward to counteract the pressure. One hand held to the rail, for even his great bulk could not stand alone against that blast.

Swenson wondered how he breathed. Yet there he stood in the storm, and even in the blackness of the night the chief officer could see the gold earrings shaking, glittering now and then in the dim light reflected from the foam. Two bells had struck off, but the sound had been lost in the uproar. Knudson, staring right ahead under his left hand, held to shelter his eyes from the flying drift, saw something. It was a light. Then it disappeared, and all was blackness.

The Captain knew what he had seen. He was Knudson, the Navigator, and he knew when to expect the meeting he had foretold. It was the sister ship of his line, the *Antares*, plunging along westward through the hurricane, and the blackness had blotted out her lights. Again between squalls Knudson saw the flash of the masthead light. It was right ahead, and he knew it was coming fast upon him. Then a furious blast blotted it out again, but he said nothing.

In that wild, savage giant a desperate resolve had formed itself. He was the master. The other ship was steering badly. No one had seen her yet, and Swenson was all but drowned hanging on where he was. The lookout must have been blinded also, for no word was passed to the wheel of the whereabouts of the approaching vessel.

With jaws set, the Captain peered again and again into the hurricane. Then suddenly he saw the red and green he had been watching for, the side lights of the liner.

Knudson fought it out there in the storm alone, as much alone as if he had been marooned upon some flying star in the firmament. He could ram the ship, disable her in spite of her size!—and he might plead an excuse, for he was aware of her disability. It would be a savage revenge. He would probably sink her, with the woman who had jilted him for mercenary motives, the woman he felt he must have to perfect his existence! He had felt in the beginning that there was none to take her place—none to fill her place either in physical beauty or mental attainments. She was what he had always waited for.

In spite of his advanced age, he was a savage, a man who felt instinctively things the higher order of man studied out. It would be a fitting end of a life that was irksome to him. The fact that he might cause the death of hundreds of other beings had no place in his thoughts. He was the supreme thing, the master, the one to be considered! His contempt for others made him callous to their rights or sufferings. He was so much superior, so much greater in every way!

And he stood there silently peering through the hurricane with his heart glad within him, thinking the wildest thoughts. Here he was master! The whole thing rested within himself. He it was to say what would take place! He even saw the tremendous wreck in his thoughts. Even saw a chance to get what he wished for, the collision, the desperate panic. He might even get aboard the other ship in that furious night, and he would find her in spite of the crowd. There were the boats—and he was very able in a small boat. He could place her in one and get away with her. It would be the easiest thing in the world for a man like himself! It appealed to him, this wild idea. He could have her if he so wished. No one could stop him. And all the wild savageness of generations of wild sea-rovers in his blood took up that call of the savage male for his mate!

The seconds were flying fast, and the hurricane squalls bore down with increasing fury upon the liners who were now within a few hundred fathoms and rushing at each other through the blackness.

III

ABOARD the *Antares* the passengers had turned in long since, as the fury of the hurricane had broken earlier than at the point where the *Nord*

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Light had been at bedtime. The tremendous rolling and pitching caused many to seek the café, where they ordered drinks and sought solace under the bright glare of the electrics. What was a storm to the *Antares*, nine hundred feet in length and with fifty thousand horse-power to drive her through? They were as safe, apparently, as if ashore.

Mlle. Zeranga had gone to bed, but the wild motion had awakened her. She tried to sleep again, and called her maid to mix her a toddy to settle the disagreeable feeling in her stomach caused by the motion. She was not often seasick, but this time she was upon the verge. She felt that if she were on deck in the air she might feel better. She insisted on dressing and going out, in spite of the orders that no passengers should be allowed on deck until the storm abated. A few dollars, discreetly bestowed by means of her maid, fixed matters in proper shape for herself. After all, seamen are very poor —and many have families.

Wrapping herself warmly, she was led by a quartermaster to a sheltered spot where she would not be noticed, and where the air might revive her. She was not in the habit of getting up at five in the morning, but this was an occasion that called for somewhat desperate measures. That sinking feeling within her was awful, terrible. She almost believed she would die before daybreak.

Dead in the lee of the superstructure she sat, with her maid in attendance. The maid shivered with the cold and wet, but clung desperately to the brandy-bottle and the night-glasses. The turmoil about them made looking into the night useless, but the Zeranga always carried her pet binoculars she had won at the races, as a matter of form. It was proper for a lady like herself to have whatever was considered right in the way of seagoing outfit, and powerful glasses were always the thing among the really able of her class.

It was while she sat there wondering whether she were to live or die from the horrible nausea, that the tremendous note of the steam whistle roared forth above the blast of the hurricane. She jumped, startled with the terrific sound. What was the liner whistling for out there in mid-Atlantic? She grasped her glasses from her maid and tried to peer around the corner of the deck-house, but the wind and spray blinded her and she drew back.

"What can it be, Marie?" she asked.

"Eet ees a ship—*sans* doubt—must be," said her companion.

It was the *Nord Light*. She was coming right on them now, and the lookout on the *Antares* had seen and reported her. The wild steering of the ship made it dangerous to pass close, and the Captain was whistling for room. Knudson thought he heard the faint roar, distant, far away, as in a dream. He was still holding on, watching under the flat of his hand, and Swenson was clinging near him, blinded, deaf and useless. He wondered why the mate kept near him when he might be in the shelter of the pilot-house. He laughed harshly to himself. The red and green showed brighter. It would be reported within a few moments—but it would be too late! The ship held her way unchecked.

It was but a question of seconds.

Knudson straightened up and turned his head to breathe.

The very position seemed to make him feel his great manhood, standing there stiff and straight in the hurricane when all others were useless. It touched something in him he could not explain, could not fathom. His savage nature never stopped to analyze. He was a creature of sudden impulse and desperate resolve, like most powerful animals. But it was something that stood for a feeling of what may be called right, as compared to what is called wrong. In that instant he decided his own and the ship's fate.

With a bound he was at the door of the pilot-house. In a fraction of a second he tore it open, and the wind, getting a hold of it, tore it from its hinges and flung it to leeward. Then he was inside and with a hoarse bellow of "Hard aport!" he whirled the small steam steering-wheel hard over and threw the telegraph to "Full Speed Astern." His ship always swung to starboard under reversed engines, and for this reason alone he reversed her, for he knew her speed would never check in the remaining distance.

He had hardly done so when Swenson dashed inside the room with the yell of, "Ship right ahead, sir! Hard aport!"

FORMS flitted here and there, for at last the lookout had seen and passed the word, but Knudson was not watching them. He was holding to the

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steam whistle, and the roar rose above the blast of the storm. Then he dashed to the port side of the flying-bridge and clung there. His cap whirled away in a fierce squall, and his oilskin coat, becoming partly unbuttoned by exertion, tore loose and was thrashed from his frame. Yet he stood there looking at the giant shadow that now loomed in the night close aboard. The row of lights told of the forward ports, yet the steady shine of the fateful red and green, the port and starboard side-lights, told him he was still heading straight for the *Antares!*

In those seconds while the huge fabrics approached each other, the soul of the seaman underwent a strain. Yet still he felt himself the master, the one who held all in the hollow of his hand. He even found himself gazing at the ports and wondering which one held the woman he desired, which stateroom was her own. He would probably see her head thrust forth in the terror of the occasion. It would be his last look at her, probably. And then the green light, the fateful green light, faded out! The red shone with increasing brightness, and above all the great headlight cast a ray through the flying drift.

The ships tore past each other within twenty feet! The davits of No. 6 lifeboat of the *Antares* ripped the cover from the No. 1 boat of the *Nord Light*—but it was never reported. The *Antares'* davits should not have been swung outboard while the boat was being painted.

Upon the deck, sheltered from the wind, stood Mlle. Zeranga. She was wild with sickness and terror. The whistle of her ship had frightened her, and the sudden apparition of the giant shape coming out of chaos gripped her heart with a cold hand of fear. She rushed to the rail as the ships tore past and she reached it just as the end of the flying-bridge of the *Nord Light* came within a few feet of her.

Standing there in his torn clothes, his figure commanding, his shaggy beard glistening to his earrings which shimmered in the flare of the electrics, stood Knudson. She knew him in a moment. He was gazing straight at her—their eyes met!

Knudson bowed gracefully, holding on to the bridge rail. He waved his hand—but said not a word. Then he vanished in the blackness as the ships, rolling and plunging, cleared each other by a space so small that the Captain of the *Antares* laid himself out flat upon his back for half an hour afterward in the pilot-house, so shaken were his nerves.

"My God—what a chance!—how dared he do it!" was the only comment of the chief officer of the *Antares*.

There was no mention of the affair afterward. Seamen do not take trouble on trust. Knute Knudson reported meeting the *Antares*, but said nothing of the peculiar manner. He had plenty of excuses if he needed them. The partly disabled engines would clear him if any charges were made—but none were.

Swenson wanted to tell, but dared not. He knew little enough. Imagination is not good to base a report upon regarding your commanding officer.

Knute Knudson ran his ship for several years. Then he vanished from the haunts of shipping men.

A WHALEMAN coming into New Bedford lately told a tale of a giant Dane who lived upon an island in the South Pacific, and who had numerous wives and henchmen whom he ruled with an iron hand. This man had very heavy gold earrings in his ears, like some savages, but of course it proved nothing. Knute Knudson, navigator of oceans, went out as he came in—mysteriously. No liners have such a man to-day in their officer equipment. Many would like to have him.

Among some of the older men who wear marks of deep-water upon their countenances, there is a whispered saying sometimes expressed in the haunts of seamen when ashore after the bottle has been passed. Some of the old fellows will tell you that Knute Knudson was never a man. They will tell you that seamen don't grow so big, so tall, so knowing, in ocean navigation. Few wear earrings. That is a sign of days that are past. If you pin them down to it, they will hint that the giant Captain of the *Nord Light* was something more—or less—than an ordinary man. He might have been the spirit of some of those big seamen who went to sea in galleys rowed with oars. Anyhow, he was an atavism. And he was a wonder to those who knew him in ships.

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Come Ahead Slow

by Frederick Irving Anderson

Mis' Paint has an eye jes' as ugly as sin,
And if you hain't lookin', she'll stave a rib in.
She is pink and she is white, like a piece of cali-KO!
And she's as black as night, if she thinks you doesn't know.

Yeedle dye, yeedle dee, yeedle dum dam do!
Oh, she's as black as night, if she thinks you doesn't know.

AND so on, ad infinitum. No one has ever attempted to count the verses that immortalize the "paint hoss," the pinto pony, west of the Missouri. What's more, no one ever sang them all at one sitting, although young Jim Hawkins was making a valorous attempt at this writing. It wasn't exactly a song, but more of a chant, a low drumming yodel like the drone of the night-herd chorus. It whiles away a lot of time, like counting one's self to sleep, and the average pinto pony does not mind it in the least, rather takes to it in fact.

Young Jim, astride his pinto pony, was gently yodeling his way along the banks of the Arkansas. He hadn't any business there. That was why he was there; young Jim, being nineteen and all legs and feet as yet, and full of curiosity as to why the United States Government should do such a foolish thing as to draw a chalk-line across the northern border of Indian Territory and tell white men to stay out. Said chalk-line being as insulting as a barbed-wire fence to a free ranger.

Jim was moving with caution, not because he was afraid of Indians—having played with them ever since he was old enough to sight a gun—but because he was wary of troopers, who used bayonets for pitchforks when they found an intruder to chase off the reservation. He didn't know where he was going, and he didn't know why, but he was on his way, and being mighty quiet about it. He had been living on jerked beef and Arkansas River water for three days and he was beginning to wonder whether curiosity paid, up to the point of cutting extra holes in one's belt.

The tantalizing part of it was that there were toothsome feasts of wild turkey or prairie-chicken to be had almost every step of the way—to be had for three jumps of his horse and a sharp sting of his quirt. But in spite of the fact that he hadn't seen a human being for three days, it wasn't good tactics, if one valued a whole skin, either to

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jump one's horse or to snap one's quirt. There were Indians on all sides, and troopers in between. Besides which, the youth was just now puzzling over a growing conviction that some one was following him, off in the brush.

Miss Paint seemed to be laboring under the same suspicion. Two or three times she had pricked up her ears and sniffed, as she jogged along to the swing of his "Yeedle dum dam do!" in the cover of the brush. Once he halted in a close cover and waited, but he had only to laugh at himself for his pains. Again, he hooded and hobbled his pony and reconnoitered on foot and on his belly, with no better results. Finally he gave it up, and resumed his ode to Miss Paint where he had left off, at the eighty-third verse.

About the middle of the afternoon on this third day, as he was rounding a bend in the river, he suddenly came on a big black sow and a boarding party of eight overgrown yet shameless piglets. The sow, in herself, was an event. But this sow had a ring in her nose. Now sows wearing this kind of jewelry were common enough around Cheneyville, sixty miles to the northeast, but they were rather distinguished parties to meet in this region. Young Jim reined in his calico cayuse and sat still and thought hard for some time. Suddenly he began to grin.

"By Jingo!" he cried, "I've got it. Uncle Billy Dobson! Here's where I get a square feed!"

UNCLE BILLY DOBSON was a simple-minded old patriarch who, so rumor had it, had secreted himself and a "passel" of hogs in some out-of-the-way corner of the Big Hole country. Once a year the old man defied Indians, troopers and mosquitoes and emerged from no one knew where with a string of fat porkers for market. A good many curious folks had essayed to follow Uncle Billy back to find out where the eccentric old man hid himself, but no one had succeeded.

"Pork chops, as I live!" mused Jim hungrily. "I'll jes' flush Mrs. Ham and her little Bacons, and ask 'em to lead me to him."

Mrs. Ham surveyed Jim Hawkins in profound astonishment as he rode forth from his cover. She examined him through a short space of time like an old woman looking over her spectacles; and then the whole porcine family turned tail as suddenly as if they were all actuated by one powerful spring.

The delighted youth watched them as they raced across the green meadow upon which they had been grazing. They ran plump up against a sheer wall of rock, and as they lost themselves in the low brush that grew at the base, their shrill cries ceased as suddenly as bottled stage thunder.

"I wonder what Uncle Billy will have to say when I walk in on his preserve," thought Jim as he dismounted and followed slowly along the trail his friends the hogs had blazed.

It looked easy, but a surprise awaited him. His guides had disappeared as completely as if they had been swallowed up in a hole in the ground. He beat the brush up and down for a space of a hundred yards, but neither hide, hair nor squeal of a hog could he find. He surveyed the cliff of stone. It was like a fortress wall.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he thought.

Two hours later, he thought the same thing. The pork family was an optical illusion, for all he could find to the contrary. He sat down to another meal of jerked beef and river water, trying to figure it out, but it wouldn't figure. The more he figured, the madder he got.

"Uncle Billy's within a hog-shot of this yere meadow, and Uncle Billy is going to have company before the moon comes up, or my name isn't Jim Hawkins."

Having thus delivered himself of his ultimatum, he hobbled Miss Paint and started forth on foot. Three hours, dripping with perspiration under the awful heat that has a habit of growing yellow in this part of the country just before sundown, he confessed himself beaten.

He figured he had threshed over every inch of country within a radius of a mile, but not a trace could he find of the hypothetical hog domain. He started wearily back to the river bank where he had left Miss Paint. Luck seemed with him here, for, half-way back, he came across the familiar piece of calico in the brush, and he tickled her behind an ear and told her in verse just what he thought of her and all of her kind.

Jim set a great store by his horse, as his horse did by him. But on this particular occasion the calico cayuse seemed to have

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something on her mind. As he put his foot in the stirrup, she suddenly shot back her ears and bounded off like a rubber ball. Jim picked himself up from a grass hummock and started after her, cursing softly and harmlessly to himself. Catching a frolicsome broncho without a rope isn't child's work, especially when the thermometer is sitting on the roof.

The pony took to the tall timber, and her pursuer floundered after her, now knee-deep in moss, now jumping crevices, now climbing windfalls. The devil himself seemed to possess the horse, and just as Jim was ready to cry quits, the creature came to a stop not ten feet ahead of him, snorting. Jim clapped a heavy hand on her muzzle, and he was just beginning to explain what he thought of her, in prose, when, "Hello! What have we here?" he cried.

For the trembling beast was standing on the brink of a precipice. Below was a sea of foliage. He was looking into an enormous well, filled with trees, their spars coming almost to the level of the surrounding amphitheater of rock.

Fifty yards away, from what seemed to be a clearing, there rose a thin spiral of smoke. And down the breeze came an odor that was positively painful. He sniffed once, he sniffed again, and stark hunger gripped him in the middle. It was the aroma of roast pork. Joy and gladness! Nay, gentle reader, do not shudder at the thought of roast pork with the thermometer leaving the tube through the scuttle. You never have dined for three days at a stretch on jerked beef reclaimed from harness leather.

"Well, bless your durned old hide!" cried Jim, patting the foam-flecked horse. "I reckon you knowed I was looking for Uncle Billy. Come on, old gal. What's that you say?"

The pony jerked back and flattened her ears. And then for five full minutes Jim wrestled with eight hundred pounds of live wires. But he won, even if he did have to play foul by shutting off her wind to do it. He surveyed the fractious creature, and, as something unfamiliar in the saddle-kit caught his eye, he started in amazement. The kit wasn't his! The stirrups were at least two inches longer, and a lariat of hair hung at the horn. Jim rode without a rope.

This paint hoss wasn't the paint hoss he had been yodeling to for the last three days. This wasn't his hoss. He doubted his own eyes for the nonce. But seeing was believing, especially between Jim and a hoss.

What was the answer? He tied this new pony with a double hitch around a tree, and sat down to think. Who owned this calico pony that was a ringer for Miss Paint? And where was the real Miss Paint? He'd find out. He started down the declivity, but he hadn't gone far when he saw something that brought him up short.

Through the trees he could see the meadow where he had hobbled his horse when he started on his quest for Uncle Billy's retreat. And on this meadow at this moment were four horsemen, troopers! One of them had dismounted and was pointing to something on the ground. Then suddenly they scattered out. They were hot on some trail, whether the trail of the real Miss Paint or the bogus one now in his possession he could only guess. But the neighborhood was extremely unhealthy, with troopers scouting the woods. He climbed back up the hill. The odor of roast pork still rode the breeze.

"You'll stay here till I come back," said Jim to himself as he made sure of the rope that held his new horse.

The spar of a tall hemlock stood within ten feet of the edge of the rock in the curious amphitheater. It was a good jump without a take-off, but Jim was in a hurry and not speculating. He crouched and sprang, and his fingers closed on the gummy bark, and he hung on for dear life until the swaying spar came to a rest. The rest was easy. In a jiffy he was standing in a bed of soft needles, seventy-five feet below.

A HUNDRED feet ahead of him, through the trees, he saw a snake-fence enclosure. The roof of a shanty showed over the fence, and the light of a fire glowed through the chinks. The timber came up flush on one side of this enclosure, and on the other was a clearing in which sported an army of hogs—big hogs, little hogs and in-betweens, carrying on a conversation on topics of general interest, in which all were taking a hand. But most astonishing of all was the sight of a calico cayuse—none other than the real Miss Paint!

Jim looked around at the surrounding circle of rock, seeking an opening. But there

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was none to be seen. How did Miss Paint get in here, and who brought her in? It was too much for Jim. He gave it up. Uncle Billy could solve the riddle. So Jim started forward. It would be just as well to announce himself gently, thought Jim, seeing that he was coming uninvited. As an extra precaution, he took a look at his six-shooter. Then he crawled forward on his belly and peered through the chinks in the fence. A strange sight met his eyes.

There were three men within. Two of them sat at a rough table hewn out of slabs. The third was huddled up in a corner ten feet away, a shot-gun between his knees. The shot-gun was staring at the two men at the table. The man in the corner had a pistol strapped to his belt, and by his side lay two holsters, with pistol butts showing. Jim looked at the two men at the table. They were unarmed. He whistled softly to himself.

"Looks to me as though I have broke into a jail," he thought.

But Uncle Billy Dobson was not the jailer. Jim knew the patriarch by sight. And that was he sitting at the end of the table, munching at a rib of pork. Jim started as he looked at the other man at the table. He was a big man, tall, gaunt and grizzled. His ears stood out at full sail. But that wasn't the remarkable part of it. Through the bell of one ear showed a round streak of daylight, as clean as a gimlet hole.

"I'm jiggered again!" mused the youth. "Semaphore Pete!"

Now this same Semaphore Pete was no ordinary individual. He got his name from his ears. He could wag them as an ordinary individual wags his thumbs. They were, in fact, semaphores, and to amuse the admiring youth of Cheneyville he frequently displayed his prowess. He would set the signals, "Danger!" "Come ahead slow!" or "Track clear!"

Jim wasn't surprised to see him here. He knew that Pete and Uncle Billy were old pals, and that Pete always kept a guardian watch over the eccentric hog-farmer whenever he came to Cheneyville. Undoubtedly Semaphore Pete was one man in the secret of the hog domain and he was now in the act of making a call. But who was the third man? Jim didn't have to look twice to see that this man was holding the two old cronies on the end of his gun, so to speak. Semaphore Pete looked up from his victuals and grinned at the man in the corner.

"Jack," he drawled, "jes' shift that bucket of slugs of yours to windward a bit, will ye? It's staring a hole in my stummick."

The man in the corner only leered in answer. Uncle Billy entered the conversation:

"Feeling a bit pesky, ain't ye, Jack?"

There was no answer to this, and silence settled down again. The man in the corner showed his yellow teeth occasionally, and rolled his eyes. He seemed to be enjoying the situation in a bleary sort of way. The two eyes of his shot-gun never wavered, following the two men in every move. After a while he himself began to eat, from a tin plate by his side, jamming the food into his hairy face like wadding into a smooth-bore gun, but his trigger finger kept constant guard. Jim's two old friends were in dire straits.

THE youth measured chances as he squinted through the crack. He could snip off that trigger finger with one shot, but the same shot might touch off the trigger and—Jim kept his eyes off the tempting mark.

"I'll lay low a bit," he decided. "I'd give my interest in the pearly gates just to let Semaphore Pete know I was standing by."

He thrilled from head to foot. The idea of being the humble instrument that was to rescue the great and only Semaphore Pete—and incidentally his friend, Uncle Billy—from what looked like a hold-up, was pleasing to the youth. Pete and Uncle Billy lit their pipes and smoked, breaking the silence occasionally with some facetious remark.

"I'm mighty glad I came to the party, Uncle Billy," Pete was saying as he pulled at his corn-cob. "Shucks!" he exclaimed, "this yere pipe can't draw no better'n—no better'n——"

He gave up his search for a fitting simile and picked up a handful of alder stems, from which he selected a likely one and dug out the pith for a new stem. Jim felt his heart jump. Here was an idea. He crawled back to the woods and found a long clean alder stem and hollowed it out. He rolled little balls of the pith, and thus armed with a "spit-ball" tube, he took up his old position again. He grinned in the face of his

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excitement. There were Semaphore Pete's ears standing at full sail.

Jim took careful aim and blew sharply through the tube. The pellet of pith sailed straight and true. It hit Pete's off ear and fell on the table.

Semaphore Pete never batted an eyelash. He refilled his pipe, tore off a sulphur match, watching the blue flame turn to yellow with aggravating slowness. He turned carelessly in his seat until he faced the spot where the palpitating Jim lay waiting for a sign. As he raised his match to the pipe, he winked one eye. He knew.

Jim hugged himself inwardly. There is nothing like having a finished partner in a ticklish situation. And Pete was finished. Now as he sat puffing his pipe, his eyes studying the ground, he wagged his off ear once—then he wagged it twice. He was setting the signals. It was as plain as the nose on one's face. He was saying:

"Danger!" Then, "Come ahead slow!"

"Jack," said Pete suddenly, "tune up a bit and tell us the story of your life. The party ain't as peart as it oughter be."

Jack was willing. He related with much gusto how on a recent lamented occasion he had accidentally touched off his gun when one of his friends had been thoughtless enough to fill a flush on a two-card draw. Jack lit out without waiting for the funeral, not hankering to serve as lay figure on such an occasion, and since then he had traveled some. There was a price on his head, on which he dwelt as lovingly as if it had been a new Easter bonnet direct from Broadway.

"I 'spect," drawled Jack, "that you and Uncle Billy yere would like to split up a thousand bucks between you and hand me over to the sojers, eh?"

He showed his teeth in a grin. Pete yawned.

"I ain't hankering," said Pete.

Jack threw back his head and bellowed a laugh that caused the various Messrs. and Mesdames Hams—who by this time had tucked their little Bacons in for the night—to sit up and inquire shrilly into the cause of the disturbance. Jack arose to his feet, and Jim's fingers tightened on the butt of his gun.

"Time to stow the chillun for the night," said Jack, as he waved his gun toward the shanty. "And don't try no shindies!" he snarled.

Pete turned casually as he yawned again, and, looking squarely at the spot where Jim lay, he closed one eye and wagged his off ear.

"Shucks!" thought Jim, whose trigger finger was itching. "He's telling me to come ahead slow."

The two prisoners entered the shanty lock-stepped, and their jailer kicked up the fire with his boot and threw on more wood. Through the door Jim could see Pete and Uncle Billy prepare to settle down for the night. Jack backed up to the fence so close that the youth could have touched him with his fingers. Jim lay so still his bones ached. He had figured out the queer situation now. This Jack was some outlaw who had stumbled accidentally on to Uncle Billy's hog domain and had got the drop on the proprietor and his visitor before they could draw on him. Now he was holding them at the end of his gun until he could cut and run.

"Come ahead slow," Semaphore Pete had signaled to the unknown help outside. But what a chance Jim had now! He heard Jack chuckling to himself, and watched him move off. Jack made a swing or two of the circle and finally chose a seat against the fence directly opposite the door of the hut.

Jim began to crawl, inch by inch around the enclosure to the back of the hut. Once he stumbled into a sleeping porker and the resulting squeal made his hair stand on end. But the incident didn't arouse the jailer. In half an hour Jim reached his goal. He put his lips to the crack above the lowest log, and, stemming his eager breath, he signaled cautiously. Almost immediately, and so close that the whispering lips seemed to touch his own, came the words,

"Hello! Who are you?"

"Young Jim Hawkins," whispered Jim back. "Big Jim's nephy."

He could hear Semaphore Pete exclaim in surprise.

"What you doing 'round here, sonny?" came the drawling accents of Pete.

"Jes' moseying 'round," answered the youth.

There was a period of silence, and Pete whispered:

"You're a good boy, sonny. Go easy!"

Jim shivered all over.

"It's Jack Rawlins," whispered the

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steady voice. "You know Jack. He's aimin' to plug us, sonny. I know his eye."

Another long pause through which the youth waited, tense.

"Go easy, sonny—he's a bad 'un. It ain't the man what shoots first, with him; it's the man what puts the pill in the right place."

And then, after another pause:

"It's like killin' a catamount with a club. You gotter hit him quick—and right!"

Jim had heard of big men who could kill a dozen men after they themselves were shot full of holes. Here was one of them. Jim had never killed his man. Jim didn't want to kill his man.

"Sonny," whispered the voice, "hadn't yer better pass in yer gun?"

Semaphore Pete waited a long time for the answer. It didn't come. He heard the rustle of leaves outside, and then all was quiet. Pete had been lying with his face to the wall. He rolled over as though in his sleep and looked out. What he saw didn't cheer him up. The fire was down to embers, and by the fire stood their jailer, with an ax in his hand. He seemed to be thinking hard. So was Pete—and Uncle Billy.

Pete listened for some sound that would tell him that this young nephy of Big Jim Hawkins of Cheneyville was at work. He could hear the horses shifting, and the occasional grunt of a piglet turning over in its sleep—usual night sounds, nothing more. Half an hour passed.

THEN suddenly something did happen. The night air was rent with a pandemonium of sound. Bedlam broke loose. The two old men stared at each other through the darkness.

"Shucks! It's only hawgs!" whispered Uncle Billy.

And it was hogs. Never before had there been such a porcine *sangerfest.* Big squeals, little squeals, grunts, roars, blubberings, all at once.

"Catamount," suggested Pete, and Billy shook his head in silent assent. The big mountain cats dined frequently at his expense.

The din subsided as suddenly as it had arisen. They could hear Jack Rawlins cussing to himself. Jack moved to the gate and at the sound of the creaking wooden hinge Pete and Billy peered out. As quick as a flash Pete ducked back and dragged his venerable friend with him. A bullet plunked into the door-post and Pete felt his bull's-eye ear.

"He's jes' drawin' us, Billy," he cautioned. "Jack was a bit slow on the pull that time. Jack's losin' his eye."

They heard a grunt, and a sharp cry so nearly human that they almost doubted it for a moment. Then came another hog symphony, punctuated here and there with sounds of hoofs.

Pretty soon they saw a bulky figure standing over the dying fire again, ax in one hand, shot-gun in the other. He stretched himself at full length facing the cabin. He lay so still at the end of another half-hour that Semaphore Pete got into action.

"Here goes, Billy," he whispered. "I don't know what's become of the kid, but I reckon he needs help."

Pete wriggled out through the shanty door and around the corner, keeping his eye on the silent figure. It didn't move, so Pete started straight toward it, stopping every little bit to watch and listen. He was ten feet away, when "Now!" he said to himself, and he gathered for the spring. His toes were braced, every muscle was tense, when—The muzzle of the shot-gun swung slowly around and looked him squarely in the eye!

Semaphore Pete was never a quitter. He never whimpered. He was ready to take his medicine.

"All right, Jack," he laughed grimly. "That's one on me."

The man with the gun dismounted his weapon with studied calm, and arose to his feet. He stretched his arms in a yawn.

"Pete," he said, in a strange voice, "I had to have my little joke."

With a mighty yell, Semaphore Pete bounded forward. He threw his arms around young Jim—for it was he whom he had stalked—and the pair danced around the fire like wild Indians, to the astonishment of the aged Uncle Billy who came crawling out on all fours, rubbing his eyes. He couldn't believe his eyes until Semaphore Pete had exhibited Big Jim Hawkins' nephew, young Jim Hawkins, front and rear and slapped him on the back until he choked.

"Whar's Jack?" asked Pete, suddenly coming to his senses.

Jim Hawkins, the proudest man in seven

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States, chuckling, led them to the gate.

"Miss Paint—" he began. "Miss Paint, she's entertainin' yer friend out yere."

He pointed to the calico cayuse straining at a rope, a business she had been taught in the work of branding calves. The rope was slung over the limb of a tree. Hanging on the other end just off the ground, and trussed like a chicken for the roasting, was Jack Rawlins. He was bound hand and foot, nicely, neatly, and his yellow teeth were doing their prettiest to gnaw through a piece of wood tied in his face.

"AND now, sonny," piped Uncle Billy, as he helped Jim to his sixth rib of cold pork, served à la Dobson, with corn pone, "are ye full enough to confess?"

There wasn't much to tell, so Jim said.

"Pete," he began, looking across the table at the admiring human semaphore, "Pete, you kind of skeered me when you begun whisperin' about hittin' him right. I begun thinkin' about a catamount, and I thunk of a catamount I hit right onct, and I remembered how I done it—with a rope. I begin prospectin' fer a rope, and sure enough, there was Uncle Billy's rope hangin' on the gate, like no self-respectin' cow gent's rope should be hangin' out in the night. I jes' looped it over the gate, and swung one end over the limb for a fall. Then I told Miss Paint yere all about things and she sez, 'All right,' and I gives her the yend of the rope. Maybe yer heered a little squealin' around outside?" queried Jim.

Pete and Uncle Billy allowed they had heard some disturbance.

"That was me and Miss Paint a-messin' up the hawgs," explained Jim. "We reckoned Jack might come out and belt a hawg or two fer such a racket, and sure enough, out he comes.

"This yere Miss Paint," went on Jim as he passed the pinto lady a large hunk of corn pone, "Miss Paint, she does the rest. The noose it jes' naturally come down and Miss Paint she jes' naturally come up, and Jack—well, you seen Jack.

"That rope of yourn, Uncle Billy, are a daisy—works like a piece of grease. Reckon I'll take it along home with me, if ye ain't lookin'. It ketched Jack around the middle and slipped shet on him before he could say jim-jam-jingle. It ketched his arms and his hands, and his danged old blunderbus, and his ax, and his stummick, all at onct. Jack started to let out a peep, but I didn't want him to disturb you gents, so I handed him one that started him swingin' fer the hawgs. Jack plowed a furrow through them hawgs, and by the time he swung back after messin' them up, Jack was mighty glad to be good. And Miss Paint, yere, the old skate, she helped me to tie him up in a neat package such as you see before your eyes, and then she sez to me, 'You go in and have yer little joke on Pete and Uncle Billy.'"

"And yere we all be, a-smilin' and a-smilin'—" said Uncle Billy—"Thet is, all exceptin' you, Jack. Jack!" he cried turning to the trussed bundle lying at the door of the hut, "why ain't you a-smilin', eh? We got a mighty fine boy yere. A thousand dollars! Yer a heap of money tied up in one bundle for this mighty fine boy here. Ain't you sayin' nothin'?"

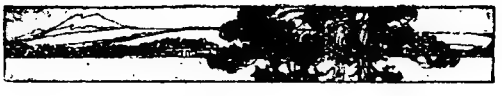
Yes, Jack was saying nothing; not even when they tried to get him to explain how he happened to pick up Miss Paint outside in mistake for his own calico pony, and how he happened to stumble on the secret entrance of Uncle Billy's cache.

"Reckon he jes' stumbled on the hole," opined Uncle Billy.

"Reckon if he did," said Semaphore Pete, "he is the first crittur as ever did, all by his lonesome."

"'Ceptin' me," piped Uncle Billy.

"And 'ceptin' me," echoed young Jim.



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Fire against Fire

by John Kemble

THE cuisine of the Linderstadt is irreproachable, as you no doubt know if you have ever sampled the hospitality of that celebrated inn, renowned from one end of Dalgaria to the other; but I could not find a single dish to spur my appetite.

For four days I had been waiting for Bentham, or at least for some word from him, but to all intents and purposes he had dropped completely out of existence since the previous Saturday in Vienna, when he had helped me aboard the Orient Express, that train of dusty *wagon-lits* which wends its more or less snail-like way between Ostend and the Far East three times a week.

"When you reach Strelsburg," he had said on the way to the station, "go to the Linderstadt; it's the best hotel in the city and nearest the Winter Palace."

"I know," had been my reply, "but are you not forgetting that the King's marriage is a week off? Every apartment was probably spoken for months ago."

"I am not in the habit of forgetting anything," was his quick retort. "You will find a room reserved for you."

"But how can that be?" I persisted. "When up to this morning you had no idea of leaving Vienna?"

"Are you a mind-reader," he snapped out, "that you are so conversant with my ideas?"

"I beg your pardon," I replied, somewhat coldly. "You told me at breakfast that you had rented a villa at Hietzing, and that we were going to settle down for a much-needed rest. I gave you credit for meaning what you said—that's all."

A smile crept around the corners of his mouth, and he clapped me briskly between the shoulders.

"It's my place to apologize, old man! You are quite right: up to a few hours ago I fully intended to rusticate for an indefinite period in the suburbs. In spite of my determination to reject all appeals for assistance, I have been prevailed upon by the Government of a Balkan state to lend them our services for a short time.

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"Of course," he went on, "reserving a room for my chief and only assistant would therefore be a mere bagatelle. And forty-eight hours after your arrival I shall join you. In the interim, lose yourself in the crowds, keep your ears open, and pick up all the gossip that's current."

"What sort of gossip?" I inquired, seeking a little light on the nature of the case. "How am I to know what is important?"

"You won't, nor shall I, until we have gone over the ground thoroughly. Let nothing escape you." He gripped my arm firmly. "It is unnecessary to add that you are to be on your guard constantly from the moment we part. There may be considerable danger in store for us both, and caution must be the watchword. I can't be sure yet—I have only just entered the game—but the stakes are high and we are not apt to run into anything resembling the play of children."

"Has it anything to do with the approaching marriage?" I ventured. "If it has, are we not called in at a rather late hour?"

"They must be a bit hard put to send for me." He smiled. "Our relations in the past have not been precisely amicable, and I have every reason to believe that I am being used as a last resort. For," and he spread his palms with a most expressive gesture, "they have had some of the best detectives in Europe on the spot for weeks, and no doubt a great deal has been 'detected.'

"Two attempts have been made upon the King's life, however, within the last ten days. So much for detective results! A dozen or more arrests have evidently not seriously halted the assassinating movement; for neither of the recent attempts failed through the vigilance of the professional police, but were entirely due to a lack of care on the part of the would-be murderers. So at the last moment they think of Bentham, the preventor, and we shall see what we shall see, for I have *carte blanche.*"

"Anarchists!" I whispered, one foot on the compartment step.

His reply was lost to me, for at that moment I was thrust unceremoniously into the car, and the door closed behind me. I caught a last glimpse of him as the train crept out of the gloomy station. He was quietly lighting a cigarette. That was Saturday, it was Thursday now.

I MADE a pretense of ordering dinner, and dismissed the waiter with a wave of my hand. Day after to-morrow the royal alliance would take place, and every nook and cranny of the city was full to overflowing with the thousands who had come to witness the fêtes that would be ushered in when the wedding-bells chimed from the cathedral of San Sebastian. Day after to-morrow, and no Bentham—it was maddening!

True to his instructions, I had kept my ears and eyes constantly open. I wandered up broad boulevards where electric trams whiz and clang along, and down dismal, half-finished ones, with rooks cawing and circling overhead. I went in and out of shops, modern and up to date, side by side with Turkish stalls where sallow-visaged men squat and blow cigarette-smoke into one's face. I drew gray-coated, flat-capped gendarmes into conversation, and pumped sleek foreigners lounging about the hotel lobbies. I made friends with peasants in linen blouses and round astrakhan caps, wrapped snugly in blankets. Went everywhere and did everything, in fact, and what had I learned? Nothing—absolutely nothing!

I flung myself upon the first dish that appeared on the table, completely at my wit's end—sick of the whole business, if you want the truth—and of a mind to take the first train back to Vienna, when I noticed an attaché of the Linderstadt making his way toward my table. In another moment I was holding with trembling fingers a letter addressed to me in the unmistakably bold and flowing hand of the one person I was most anxious to hear from.

Tossing the first coin I found in my pockets to the page, I tore open the envelope, regardless of onlookers whose curiosity might be aroused by my excitement, and ran my eye down its contents. At the last hour Bentham had turned up, and, coolly ignoring the days of suspense I had lived through, merely wrote:

Meet me at the Balka at eight to-night.

Nothing more. Not a word as to where he had been or why he had remained silent so long. And where was the Balka? And what was it? A hotel—a café—a theater, or a dance-hall?

Pushing back my unfinished dinner, I

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strode through the glittering tables and made my way to the lobby. In hurrying to the door that gives upon the Stroska Ulitska, I collided violently with a little man in black and, stopping to murmur an apology for the results of my haste, I followed it up with an inquiry as to the location of the Balka.

The smile that had been about to greet my excuses died away, and he gave me a quick and disconcerting stare before he volunteered any answer. When one did come it took the form of an interrogation.

"What made you imagine that I could direct you to the Balka?" he asked in crisp, cold accents.

"I did not stop to imagine at all," I responded, put out by his tone. "I am merely anxious to go there and, being a stranger, hoped that you——"

"Of course!" He regarded me hesitatingly for a moment, then with a slight shrug of his shoulders gave me the necessary directions. I thanked him and was about to continue on my way when something in his gaze arrested me as my hand was on the door, and prompted another question:

"Is it a particularly disreputable place—this Balka?"

"It's a dive of the worst description," was his immediate reply.

No wonder he resented my assuming an acquaintance with that sort of place! But it was too late to offer further apologies. I reached the sidewalk as quickly as I could, conscious, however, that the little man in black had not moved from where I had left him, and furthermore convinced that his sharp eyes were following my progress suspiciously. It had been a mistake to accost him at all.

I slipped into a doorway and glanced around to see whether his curiosity had led him to follow me. The street was almost deserted, so, holding close to the shadows, I sped along. The big clock on San Sebastian was striking the hour. However briskly I walked, it would be impossible to reach my destination less than twenty minutes late.

This was like him, selecting the Balka for a rendezvous. He never failed to grasp possibilities of the picturesque. I had no doubt in my mind that he had chosen it solely that we might have a background of low-browed Greeks and brigandish Macedonians at the meeting-place.

II

A LONG, low building suddenly loomed out of the night, its green lantern, swinging above the door, telling me that I had reached the end of my journey. But it told me no more, for otherwise the house was as dark and deserted as its neighbors.

A low-studded cellar-like room confronted me, and at first glance it appeared to be quite empty; though, as I looked more carefully, I could make out the figures of four or five men huddled about tables near the rear wall. A cloud of rancid tobacco-smoke, thick and heavy, rushed forward as I stood in the draft of the open door, and choking back a cough, I stepped swiftly into the apartment. What an evil-smelling den it was! The habitat of out-at-the-elbow Slav and ratty Muscovite, if the present company was to be taken as typical of its patrons.

Although every eye must have noticed my sudden appearance in their midst, not a voice was raised to question its abruptness, and I sank quietly down in one of the darkest corners as a little wizen-faced Greek slipped up to me and stood waiting for my order. Muttering the name of the first native wine that popped into my head, I watched him slink away. Well! Now that I was here, what next? Where was Bentham? There was nothing to do but wait anyway, so, lighting a cigarette, I sank as far back into the shadows as I could; and by the time the attendant returned, I was in wonderfully good spirits.

The wine warmed my blood and I was on the point of complimenting the Greek upon its vintage when I realized, with a start, that I was not alone at the table. On its further side sat two men, glaring at me, unfriendliness bristling from every pore.

For a second or two, I sipped my wine and returned stare for stare. The chances were that their presence bore no relation at all to my affairs. They had come to the table by chance, and they had as much right to be there as I had, for it was unquestionably the custom of the place to share tables with strangers. I dropped my eyes and concluded to give them no further attention, but a grimy fist suddenly smote the board almost under my nose, and a harsh voice broke the silence with a Turkish oath:

"Beard of the Prophet! Are you dumb?"

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There was no mistaking the intent this time. I was certainly the person addressed, for the man's features were thrust across the board with an aggressiveness there could be no misinterpreting.

"No, I have a tongue," I managed to reply, realizing that I must control my temper if I hoped to avert trouble.

"Then why don't you use it?" snapped out the other man, leaning back in his chair and fixing me with a belligerent grin.

"Haven't you made a mistake?" I retorted. "A mistake in the man? It can not be possible that I could have anything to say that would be of the slightest interest to either of you."

The tallest of the pair bent forward and whispered something to his companion.

"I think not," he immediately replied. "Do you not call yourself Gregor—Jorge Gregor?"

That my name should be known to these ruffians was the very last possibility that had occurred to me, and for the first time I looked them both over carefully, perceiving at once that I had been mistaken in taking them to be ordinary habitués of the Balka. In spite of their outrageous costumes they were plainly far superior types —bandits of a kind, probably, but assuredly not common cutthroats, nor men given to mixing in small affairs. All of a sudden it struck me that I must be face to face with prime movers in the plot that Bentham had taken upon himself to circumvent.

That would explain everything. The message from him had been a lure, forged and used to get me into their power. A pretty trap surely, and one that I had walked into with my eyes open!

MY HAND dropped quickly to a side pocket which held the Browning automatic pistol I had made a point of carrying ever since my arrival in Strelsburg, and I sprang quickly to my feet.

As I did so the circle of onlookers, who had risen from adjacent tables at the first indications of a quarrel, spread quickly back, and I found myself confronted by only my two table mates; the one who had done most of the talking blocking my passage, his features contracted into what was evidently intended to be an awe-inspiring scowl.

"Pardon me, monsieur!" he growled, speaking English for the first time, for the benefit of the bystanders, whose faces fell at being unable to follow the conversation any further. "You are not thinking of leaving us before our little talk is finished?"

"I have nothing whatever to discuss with you," I replied, trying to edge nearer the door. "If I had the leisure, I might be willing to go into the subject of your motives in bringing me to this den. As it is, I prefer other surroundings and other company. Kindly stand aside or take the consequences of a loose finger on the trigger of a pistol!" And I covered them both.

But if I expected to see evidences of fear depicted on the countenances before me I was sadly disappointed. The man who had maintained a discreet silence all along burst into a loud laugh.

"Bah!" he ejaculated. "Take away that toy, Demitri!"

And though I fired on the instant, my shot went wide of any mark; burying itself in the rafters overhead, while my arms were pinioned to my sides before I could put up anything resembling a struggle.

"Now let's adjourn to the seclusion of the next apartment," he continued easily; "that is, this gentleman and I will."

"Perhaps it would be well for you to look around outside, Demitri. Our friend's shot may have disturbed some peaceful gendarme."

Demitri only scowled and shook his head. He was apparently not to be cheated of the spectacle of my examination; so between them both I was dragged through a dirty door, and none too gently deposited upon a bench.

It had been an ignominious business from the start. My attempt at resistance had fizzled out in a single flash. And if I had made more or less of a fool of myself while the pistol had been in my possession, what sort of a chance did I now stand, absolutely unarmed?

There was apparently but a single door to the room we were now in, but there were two windows, and, aside from having shutters, neither was guarded by bars of any kind. Even as the possibility of escape in that direction crossed my mind, Demitri, who had been closing the door, moved over and took up a position midway between the two, effectually blocking any move I might have made toward them. I was

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plainly in for it. Demitri spoke first.

"Let's have this business over with as soon as possible," he said. "There's a bare chance that this *Anglais* has been followed."

"Followed!" retorted the other. "I thought you said Patoff trailed him from the hotel and reported that he left quite by himself."

"True enough," continued Demitri, "but he did stop in the lobby and exchange a few words with a little man in black."

"That's all I want to hear," snarled his companion. "There is indeed no time to waste. That description fits Stanikoff and no one else!"

A wave of pallor swept over Demitri's face.

"Stanikoff!" he stammered. "If you are sure of that, let's get out of here!"

At the mention of the little man in black my heart gave a convulsive leap. Was it possible, after all, that my speaking to him was to prove providential? The name Stanikoff meant nothing to me, but that it spelled danger to my captors was plain to see. Demitri had clearly lost all interest in me and was busily trying the shutters.

"If he spoke to Stanikoff," he went on, "of course he was followed. You can do as you like; I'm going to move!"

"And what about our friend here?"

Both men eyed me ominously.

"Cut his throat and have done with it!" growled Demitri,

Saying which he drew his knife and made a rapid lunge at me. His blade slashed only the empty air, however, for I sprang to my feet at sight of the steel. But I should not have been quick enough to dodge the thrust had his companion not seized the wrist that held the knife and turned it skilfully aside.

"None of that!" he hissed. "When there is any killing to be done, I'll let you know."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the door burst in and the room was filled with gendarmes! Their appearance was as startling to me as it was to my captors, and I fell back to the wall, pressed closely against it by the rush of the men. There was a fleeting glimpse of Demitri as he sprang to one of the windows, taking shutter and all as he plunged through. Two or three shots rang out, everything went black, and I sank limply to the floor.

III

WHEN I recovered consciousness, I was lying, tied hand and foot, at the bottom of a wagon being driven rapidly over cobblestones, to judge from the way it bumped and swerved about. What had happened? Where was I being taken, and who was taking me?

Everything came back with a rush—my trip to the Balka to meet Bentham, the trap I had fallen into, the struggle and unexpected entrance of the gendarmes. But why should I be a prisoner if the gendarmes had effected a rescue? I opened my eyes and peered about. The only answer was that the gendarmes had not been successful in their raid. They had been beaten off and I was still in the hands of the conspirators. The perspiration began to gather on my forehead in great beads.

Surely there was something that could be done. At least I had not been gagged. It might do no good, but I was free to shout at the top of my lung power, and I did so, giving a lusty cry for help. The result was that I received a sturdy kick in the ribs, administered by a man who sat in the forward part of the cart.

"Shut up!" he mumbled, or words to that effect, and struck a match, and I had a blurred vision of a gendarme squatting on a near-by seat!

Here was another surprise and the greatest one yet. If they had overcome my captors what on earth did they mean by making a prisoner of me? Surely the little man in black—Stanikoff, they had called him—knew that I was—But, as a matter of fact, what could he know? I had merely inquired of him the way to the Balka. He might as readily have suspected me as my companions. And if he had followed me he had done so to watch, not to protect me.

The wagon pitched frightfully, adding torment of body to torment of mind, and I was little more than a wreck when it finally pulled up and I was hauled out like a bale of hay into the flickering light of a gendarmerie, where I stood between two burly specimens of personified law and order, while my name and description were duly entered upon the records.

One glance at my interrogator and a hearing of the charges preferred against me revealed the uselessness of making any pro-

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test at that time and I allowed myself to be led to a dark and forbidding cell.

All I wanted at the moment was to be left alone, and I sank gratefully upon the moldy straw when the door swung to and left me in complete darkness. If I had actually had designs upon the King's life I could not have acted more suspiciously than I had from the moment of my arrival at the Linderstadt.

My legs had been untied, though my arms were still tightly bound at my sides, and as I stretched them to set the blood circulating I was stunned to hear the sound of a man's voice not twenty feet away. And the words that reached my ears were more startling still.

"For the love of heaven, Gregory, come over here and help me untie this infernal rope! I should never have let them bind me up if I had had the slightest idea they were capable of attaining such excellent results."

I HAD been mistaken in the handwriting, but I was sure of the voice. It was Bentham speaking! His cheerful accents still echoed between the walls of the cell and sent the red blood of hope coursing through my veins. Bentham, but a prisoner, evidently, even as I was. Stumbling to my feet, I lurched unsteadily in the direction his words came from.

"Where are you, and what on earth are you doing here?" I whispered, unable to locate him in the Egyptian darkness.

"Right in front of you, to the first part of your question. Have you got a cigarette about you? I am famishing for a gentleman's smoke."

Some people can think of the most trivial things at the most trying moments. Bentham was such a one. I could not conceal my impatience.

"And if my pockets were full, what good would it do? I can't move my hands, and if I could it would be tempting Providence to strike a match."

"Providence needs a little tempting now and then. Roll over once more in this direction. You didn't imagine that I had been here twenty minutes without at least getting one hand free, did you? Which pocket holds the matches?"

"The left," I muttered, wondering whether he had entirely lost his wits.

His fingers began rummaging about my coat, and before I realized that he had found them a match spluttered and flared, making a hole of light in the inky blackness. I sat up quickly as the shadows broke away, for instead of looking into Bentham's face I found myself gazing with wide-open eyes at the countenance of Demitri's companion —my second assailant of the Balka!

It seemed incredible, yet there he was at my very elbow, coolly burning through the rope that bound his left hand. The match went out as I stared, and the darkness swirled about us again—pierced only by the dull glow of the smoldering rope-end.

"Not a bad make-up, eh?" came Bentham's voice at my ear.

"So you were at the Balka, then!" I stammered. "And Demitri?"

"A good pal of mine," he whispered; "not exactly broken to the manners of good society nor a humanitarian; few of us are." He gave a satisfied grunt. "There, that's better." Then aloud, as he flung the ropes into a far corner: "I spent a good six hours over this masquerade, and if I had thought there was any danger of your seeing through it I should not have ventured to show myself. But I had to see you and there seemed to be no other way of arranging it, so I fell in with Demitri's overmastering desire to make your acquaintance and eventually found a way of using the meeting to good advantage." Another match flared. "Now the cigarettes, if you don't mind. The right pocket? Good! The same old brand! You certainly understand quality in Turkish tobacco."

And he was puffing away contentedly.

"Just a minute," I began. "It may seem sane to you to sit here discussing the merits of my cigarettes, but I call it foolhardy. Have you forgotten where we are and why we are here?"

"Certainly not," he laughed. "We're characters in a melodrama waiting in the wings for the next scene to be set. This is a lull between acts. I'm trying to forget my part for a few minutes, though you seem loath to shake yours at all. That's because you are a born actor, my boy! I never knew it until to-night, but your reading of the lines, 'Kindly step aside or take the consequences of a loose finger on the trigger of a pistol!' was classic. Lewis Waller himself couldn't have done them better."

I was by no means proud of my rôle so far in the evening's entertainment, and he

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could not have touched me on a more sensitive spot.

"It would not have been quite so laughable," I replied testily, "if my shot had chanced to hit you!"

"You score there, Gregory! Though something tells me it is not written in the book of Fate that I should fall before a bullet of yours."

"God forbid!" said I heartily. "Thank heaven I am neither a quick shot nor a good one."

His hand encountered mine.

"Your patience deserves better treatment than I am capable of giving, old man!" All traces of raillery were gone from his speech. "But put your mind at rest on one score at once: we are here tonight only because I wished things to turn out this way. There isn't time to go into everything that has happened since we last parted that day at the station, but I can assure you that my hands have been full every moment since my arrival Tuesday, and my plans are all complete, or will be before morning."

"But are we not prisoners?" I put in, unable to follow the twists and turns of the last hour.

"We certainly are," was his quick reply, "but prisoners from choice, not from necessity—a distinction with a great deal of comfort in it. This sounds rather blind, doesn't it? Well, the truth is, I am hand and glove with the King's enemies. You can readily understand, therefore, that any open method of communication either with you or with the Government would have betrayed me. So imagine my satisfaction when Demitri suggested the Balka lure. For purposes of his own, of course.

"It offered the one solution that I had been seeking—it assured a meeting with you and guaranteed a conference with the royal family. All I had to do was to make some sort of a disturbance at the Balka that would call in the police. The simplest thing in the world to do, and, as it turned out, you obliged me by a shot from your Browning."

"You sought arrest, then?"

"Of course I did. Don't you think I could have escaped with Demitri if I had made the attempt?"

"But suppose there had been no gendarmes handy?"

"You fixed that, my boy! Again I am your debtor. I knew that you were being constantly watched. One or two clever detectives have been at your heels day and night. It would have been quite impossible for you to have come to so notorious a place as the Balka unattended."

"I suppose you sent me on ahead for no other purpose than to get myself watched?"

He grinned.

"It did cross my mind that if you browsed about in your most mysterious manner Stanikoff would hit your trail. Don't be offended; my sole object was not to deceive Stanikoff. I'll get rid of this costume while we talk, for the night is getting on and there's a lot to be done before daylight. This is the receiving station of the District. I expected they would bring us here, and it is ideal, for there is only one cell and one jailer, who makes his rounds once an hour —when he is sober.

"Your instructions are the next thing on the docket," he went on, sinking down beside me, "and I am sorry that I can't undo your bonds. If I did, it would place you in an embarrassing position if by any chance you should be discovered before I have time to arrange for your removal. Count on my attending to it the moment I am in touch with the palace. It must be done naturally and through the proper channels, for, above all, I must keep up the deception I am practising upon our friends the conspirators.

"As soon as you are at liberty, go straight to the office of the Minister of State, speaking to no one on the way. And obey implicitly whatever instructions he gives you. The countermine I have prepared will be sprung to-morrow night and there must be no hitch of any kind. I can count on you, I know."

"I will do my best," I declared, glad to hear that at last I was in line for definite action.

"Of course you will," he continued, rising, "and your best is so peculiarly sincere that it is invaluable. Now I'm off. Try and make yourself as comfortable as you can and look for a speedy opening of prison doors."

He gripped my fingers and disappeared in the gloom. Although I strained my ears for the least sound, I heard nothing but the creak of the latch as it closed after him. The locks had certainly not bothered him.

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IV

THE cell became more endurable now that I knew my detention was only temporary, and I made the most of the straw couch, resting without much discomfort as the surprises of the night scurried through my brain in a bewildering swirl. A welcome drowsiness finally crept over me, and the next thing I knew it was daylight and a thin streak of sunshine was sifting in through a narrow window at the far end, while a key grated in the lock of the cell door.

It swung open, giving entrance to the jailer of the night before, and a soldier, whose gray overcoat and peaked cap was that of the royal guard.

"Monsieur Gregory?" inquired the soldier, in apologetic tones.

"At your service," I responded.

"I am instructed to conduct you at once to his Excellency the Count of Gralitz and to express his regrets that through a slight miscarriage of justice you have been detained here so long and so inhospitably."

The jailer instantly sprang to my side, cutting the ropes that bound my arms and muttering all the while the most profuse apology for his treatment at the time of my arrival. I then followed my guide to the street, looking neither to right nor left, and considerably relieved to find a closed carriage waiting by the curb, and the sidewalks deserted.

We were soon driving rapidly in the direction of the palace, which we reached in a very few minutes, stopping before a low *porte de derrière* and entering a richly furnished antechamber, where the soldier left me.

He had hardly done so when the curtains at the side were pulled quickly back, revealing a dapper little man of not more than fifty. Catching sight of me, he raised his hand, and without a word I followed him into an inner room, where he sank into a high-backed chair before a massive desk which was littered with papers.

"Sit down, monsieur," he began abruptly and in a brisk, businesslike tone. Without further parley he plunged into the subject of my instructions. I won't go into them—they seemed, for the most part, very simple, and consisted, as far as I could see, in my becoming a temporary attaché of the palace. In concluding, he regarded me curiously.

"You are—I have been given to understand—completely in the confidence of Monsieur Bentham. Is that so?"

"Hardly that," I smiled. "I don't believe he ever confides anything of importance even to his most intimate friends."

"A very wise man!" The little fellow twirled his fingers furiously. "But an aggravating one at times, for even his employers must be content to remain absolutely blindfolded until he has succeeded or—failed!"

"But he never fails!" I rejoined warmly.

He flung up his hands in annoyance.

"I know all about that," he snarled, "but the best of us fail at times, and I don't mind telling you that but for his Majesty's strict commands, I should wash my fingers of to-night's proceedings. I do not believe in taking any chances, and we are going to take a very grave one. But the King is adamantine. I have literally gone on my knees to him in an endeavor to make him change his mind. He seems to have as exalted an opinion of this Bentham's powers as you have!"

"I hope you will feel less skeptical before the night is over," I remarked coolly, rising to my feet.

"I hope so, with all my heart," he added fervently. "His Majesty's welfare is my one concern. That is why I shudder at the idea of allowing the plot that has been discovered to come to a head. My course would be to nip it in the bud, or, at any event, have troops enough at the palace to render its progress beyond the doors impossible and the guards both changed and doubled."

He began pacing up and down the room.

"However," he stopped abruptly, "the King's will is my law and it shall be as he commands. No change whatever, with the exception of your introduction into the palace, will be made. I will only add that I shall hold Monsieur Bentham entirely responsible for the outcome. I am supposed to go to my chambers at the usual hour; I shall, but not to sleep until I know the King is safe."

And he returned to his desk. Considering myself dismissed, I moved toward the door. He touched a small bell and a tall, smooth-faced servant immediately entered, to whom he gave a few curt orders regarding me and bowed us from the room.

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PETKOFF took me directly to the apartment that had been prepared for my coming, and in his expert hands I underwent a complete transformation, doffing the disordered dinner-coat I had worn ever since the previous night for a resplendent military suit that gave me a most warlike appearance, and sitting down to a carefully prepared breakfast well satisfied with myself and everything about me.

As I picked up a spotless napkin and spread it across my knee, a folded sheet of writing paper slipped to the carpet, and picking it up, a glance revealed the fact that it was from Bentham in our old cipher. It ran:

> Everything is satisfactorily arranged, as you will know by the time you read this, but I have not thought it wise to tell our friend the Minister everything. You will, therefore, at ten o'clock tonight precisely, leave the room you are now in by way of the window, climbing along the balcony until you are outside his Majesty's chamber eight windows to the left. You will find the sash bolt unlocked. Enter cautiously and conceal yourself behind the curtains that guard the window, remaining there until you hear me say, "Now!" At that signal spring into the room prepared to give me whatever assistance I may need. Whatever happens, do not reveal yourself until I have given the word. That's all—only don't smoke all your cigarettes before ten—I am sure to want one very badly by midnight.

How I lived through the hours of the balance of the day and evening I do not know. In spite of all efforts to throw it off, I grew more and more nervous. I had no doubt of Bentham's succeeding with his end of the plan, but I feared with all my heart that some slip-up would occur through me. Yet my directions were clearly set down and when my watch showed that it lacked but a few minutes of the hour, I carefully opened the window and peered out.

Three stories below lay the park, bathed in moonlight, and it was obvious that my presence on the narrow balcony could be easily detected from the lawn, where the figure of a sentinel could be seen, pacing up and down. If he discovered me creeping along in the direction of the King's apartment he would be sure to sound an alarm! And yet there was no time to hesitate, for the strokes of ten were shivering on the night air, so I crawled out, lying as low as possible and working my way forward inch by inch.

Only the indistinct murmur of the densely packed city was to be heard; the clang of tram bells and the clatter of distant horse-hoofs. I reached the King's window unperceived. Shutting my teeth closely together I rose rapidly to my feet, and placing my weight against the leaded panes stepped over the sill as the window swung in without a creak. The chamber was as silent as the grave and all view of the room was impeded by the heavy plush curtains I had been instructed to hide behind. So I merely crept along in their shadow until I stood clear of the window itself by at least a foot.

There was no way of my telling the size of the apartment, nor the location of the royal bed, and for a few moments I dared make no further move for fear of attracting the attention of any one who might be in the room, either by stirring the curtains or inadvertently stumbling over an unseen obstacle. Settling back against the wall, I tried to compose myself for any developments that might be forthcoming, but as the minutes passed and nothing happened, I began to grow restless.

Bentham had said precisely ten o'clock; it must be considerably after by now. What was going on in the chamber anyway? I fancied I could hear stealthy footsteps, but I could not be sure. If I could only see something. With the desire came an inspiration—why not cut a small hole in the plush? A mere slit would be sufficient, and I could easily make one with my pocket-knife. No sooner thought than done. My eye was immediately glued to the peep-hole thus obtained and the entire room came under the range of my vision.

IT WAS very dimly lighted, and quite empty, save for the figure of the King reclining beneath the coverlet of the bed not a dozen feet from where I stood. He was evidently sleeping soundly, for I could detect his easy breathing. So far all was well then! It spoke volumes for his courage. Few men could have slept in a similar situation, with death lurking in the air, knowing that only one man stood between him and its imminent menace. It was the most striking example of Bentham's ability to inspire confidence I had ever seen. Perhaps he was only feigning sleep, but even so his face was turned to the wall and danger must approach him from the rear.

The door of the antechamber was ajar and I realized with a sense of relief that the

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guard could not be out of earshot." Moving a little so that I could command the other side of the room, my attention was suddenly attracted to the wall directly opposite. Were the shadows increasing there, or was —I caught my breath sharply and held it! It was not a shadow; the wall itself was moving and the dark spot indicated the existence of a secret passage being disclosed as the panels shot back!

I smothered an involuntary cry as I realized that the moment for action had almost arrived, and watched with beating heart the figures of three men slip snake-like into the room. Glancing quickly back toward the bed I saw that the King had not moved. The entrance of the assassins had been accomplished without the slightest disturbing sound. I had discovered them only by chance, and I thanked the lucky star that had prompted me to make a slit in the curtains.

One of the men remained standing by the passage—a sort of rear guard probably —the second passed quickly across to the door of the antechamber and deftly closed and locked it, while the third—I choked with horror—the third crept slowly toward the bed, a stiletto gleaming in his right hand!

It was impossible to make out faces. If Bentham was not one of the three there was scarcely a moment to be lost if the King's life was to be saved. And if he was in the room, why had he not given the signal? He could not fail to see that the distance between the King's bed and the approaching murderer was narrowing dangerously. Whatever happened, I had been told to wait for his signal, but surely I could not afford to do so much longer. I should be a party to the crime if I stood idly by and let things run their course.

The moment the truth of this came home to me, I hurled the curtains aside and leaped into the room, too excited by far to find voice for a warning cry, bent only on reaching the King's side before the knife descended. But even as I lurched into view, the arm fell, and the blade was buried to the hilt between the shoulders of the sleeping monarch!

Stunned by the awful sight, I wavered for an instant before throwing myself upon the assassin, and the hesitation, short as it was, put me entirely at the mercy of the regicides. Two of them were upon me simultaneously and I was borne backward to the floor, rendered speechless by a hand on my throat.

"Quick!" came a voice from the entrance to the passage.

My head was swimming and I had great difficulty in seeing what was going on about me. I only knew that the fingers on my windpipe relaxed, and that one of the men who had seized me was hurrying after the man who had spoken.

"Wait a moment!" whispered the one who still bent over me. But both of his companions had disappeared in the passage.

Jumping quickly up he seemed on the point of following them, but as I raised myself on my elbows I saw, to my amazement, that instead of doing so he went to the panels and deliberately closed them, remaining in the room himself—his only avenue of escape shut off!

When he turned, there was a smile on his face.

"Now my dear Gregory!" he began. "Why on earth didn't you wait for my signal? It might have cost you your life."

Bentham at the last moment again, only this time too late.

"My life!" I managed to answer, though I could barely speak above a whisper. "What is my life compared to the King's, just sacrificed through your unaccountable——"

"Hold on! Not so fast," he said with a chuckle. "His life," indicating the recumbent figure on the bed, "was beyond my saving."

"Beyond your saving!" I gasped. "Why, not three minutes ago he was sleeping as peacefully as you or I ever slept."

"Are you sure of that?" was his strange reply, crossing to the bedside. "Come out, Petkoff, the excitement is over for the present."

And I was dumfounded to see the servant who had waited upon me at breakfast wriggle out from beneath the bed.

Without turning to note my astonishment he continued, speaking rapidly now:

"Go at once to the King's secretary, Monsieur Mandershiff, and tell him that all is well—that the news of his Majesty's death should be quietly spread in the quarters agreed upon."

I waited until Petkoff had vanished through the antechamber door before I ventured a single query.

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"What in the world——"

But he cut me off in mid-sentence.

"Questions can wait," he snapped out, "this body can't. Lend me a hand and we will have it out of here in no time."

Without the loss of a moment, I assisted him in removing it to a small room near the head of the bed.

"Now for your quarters and a good wash-up," said Bentham, putting his arm in mine. "The balcony is the shortest route. Lead on!"

"Aren't you afraid of being seen from below?" I expostulated.

"It won't matter if we are," he ran on. "This is the royal wing of the palace. The King's family often use the balcony. We couldn't be recognized from the park."

V

So back we went along the trail of my crawling passage of a short while before, and no word passed between us until we were safely in my rooms.

"I hope you obeyed the last sentence of my note," he began, throwing off his coat and preparing to resume his own identity. "I told you I should want a smoke before midnight, and I do, badly!"

I tossed him my case and sat heavily in the chair before the fire. To judge from appearances he was not only satisfied with the night's work, but elated over it; and its ending had been as disastrous as it could possibly have been. My mind shrank from the conclusion, but did the explanation lie in my having looked upon Bentham as the protector of the King, when all along he had been in league with his enemies? But such a thought stained his hands with blood, and while I knew that he went to the border lines of the law sometimes, I could not believe he would allow a human life to be sacrificed.

"Don't look so glum," came his voice at my shoulder, just as another disturbing possibility suggested itself to me, "the trouble you are wrestling with is common to the general run of humanity. You are blind because you see too much. It sounds like a paradox, but it isn't. Seeing is believing only when you understand the extreme fallibility of the sense of sight. The truth is never to be reached by the use of one sense alone, anyway; it can only be deduced by a comparison of impressions received from every source after they have been discounted by Reason." He took the nearest chair and smoked away. "For example," he went on, "you saw the King stabbed with your own eyes, therefore you at once conclude that the King is dead."

"Not only that," I broke in, "I heard you tell Petkoff to inform Mandershiff of his death."

"Thereby adding the evidence of another sense, eh? The sense of hearing. Now let me tell you something—the King has not been inside his chamber since early this morning. The man you saw stabbed was a nameless stranger who met his death in a perfectly natural way nearly twenty-four hours ago, and whose body I borrowed from the morgue for the purposes of my little plan. So much for the value of impulsive conclusion."

"They assassinated a dead man," I whispered, "thinking it was the King himself? But I heard him breathing!" I added.

"You heard Petkoff breathing, you mean. In a dimly lighted room, it is difficult to determine the precise location of sound. I admit that much; in fact, I counted on such being the case when I placed Petkoff, or rather had him place himself, under the royal bed in the approximate position of the body above him."

"And the assassins are convinced that their murderous plot succeeded?"

"More convinced than you were a few minutes back, for the man who gave what was intended to be the fatal thrust prides himself on never having bungled a job of the kind. Personally I feel sure that if you were to examine the body of the unfortunate stranger, you would find that the steel passed cleanly through the heart. I have seen samples of Demitri's work before."

"But suppose," and I shuddered, "suppose they had taken the trouble to look at their victim closely? They would have quickly discovered the trick being played upon them."

"Very true; that was one of the things I had to guard against, although it was extremely unlikely that they would waste any time, once near enough to strike. They had to consider the danger of his waking, you know; and again, why should they suppose it was the body of any one but the King lying in the royal bed? They are not gifted with much imagination. If they were,

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they would be leading more charitable lives. But I was prepared for a move of that kind and that is why I remained near the door of the antechamber, apparently to guard against surprise from that quarter, but really to keep my fingers on the electric switch, which I could have thrown, plunging the room into darkness, if Demitri had attempted a close inspection.'

"Another moment of danger was after the blow had been dealt. An examination of the body would have been safe and natural then, but all that it was necessary to do in case such a contingency arose was to withdraw their attention immediately by creating an alarm of some sort, your presence behind the curtains providing a very natural one; for at a signal it was agreed that you were to spring into the room. You undoubtedly hastened their departure by your premature appearance. To tell the truth, Gregory, you are a good actor only when you are actually living a part. That's why I said nothing to you regarding the substitution—I wanted your performance to be convincing!

"EVENTUALLY they will learn the truth, of course, but not until it is too late to avail themselves of it by hatching another plot. As soon as the wedding takes place, they will have nothing to gain by the King's death. The motive will no longer exist. Of course you do not understand. I will try and make it clear to you in a few words.

"When I first told you of this commission, you may remember a remark of mine to the effect that my relations with the Dalgarian Government had not been exactly amicable in the past. I had reference to the time Duke Stephan, uncle of the present ruler, returned from exile; his reinstatement into royal favor being due, to some slight extent, to diplomatic efforts of mine.

"His case offered a few rather unusual complications, or I should never have undertaken to assist him, for even at that time he was inordinately ambitious; and I have yet to see a man of really great ambition who is not a constant menace to organized society. I had expected to hear of his desires flaming into action before this, and at once laid the blame for the present conspiracy at his door.

"It was a shot, of course. I had to draw my bow at a venture, for I was given no clues whatever, but I was right. Duke Stephan has been the head of the one really strong opposition party in Dalgaria for a number of years, though he has completely disarmed suspicion by outwardly attaching himself to every public and private interest of the young ruler. But secretly, preparations for an uprising have been going on for a long time. The scheme to place himself upon the throne was hatching in his busy brain even when he was in exile, as I learned by chance one day in rummaging about his castle in Kustandi. I have never forgotten the discovery and have kept a weather eye on the politics of Dalgaria ever since; watching, with no little interest, the movements of the two Powers upon whose tacit support he would largely depend at the last moment."

He lit another cigarette, and bent forward in his chair, gazing seriously into the fire.

"Oh, the undercurrents of European diplomacy!" he sighed. "How many crimes have fattened in their unseen depths, how many mysteries will remain forever unsolved in their ceaseless swirl! The news of the King's betrothal brought everything necessarily to a head. For it came very suddenly a few months ago, like a bolt out of a blue sky, spelling disaster, final and irretrievable, to the Duke's hopes.

"It brought Dalgaria under the suzerainty of a country hostile to all that he stood for, and well able to make short work of any conspiracy threatening its protected prince. It was a situation, in short, that could be met in only one way—by preventing the marriage. And nothing less than the death of the King could possibly stop it, for, ever since the match was arranged, Dalgaria has been flooded by the troops of the interested country—ostensibly to make a brilliant showing for the bride, but actually as a warning to the other Powers to keep their hands off.

"Open intervention from the outside being thus checked, since no interests at stake warranted the precipitation of a Continental war, the only recourse left either the Duke or the Powers behind him was the adoption of secret means of getting rid of the King. My work was therefore cut and dried for me. It only remained to choose the battleground and to move as secretly as they were moving."

"But how in the world did you manage

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to enter the inner circles of the conspirators?" I interrupted.

"I encountered less difficulty in that direction than I anticipated," he responded, stretching his arms and yawning. Do you remember the Federal spy, Webster, who in the Civil War in America managed to thwart the intended assassination of the newly elected President—Lincoln? He gained the confidence of those conspirators in less than twenty-four hours. I had nearly forty-eight. Of course the identity I assumed helped me wonderfully, being that of a man well known a few years ago in the Russian Foreign Secret Service.

"I have successfully impersonated him a number of times, for I knew him very well and doubt if any one beyond myself knows that Goron met his death when the steamship *Reinland* went down with all on board. But at no time has my position been in the least ticklish, for Goron could only come to Strelsburg in the interests of his Imperial Master, and I could also rely upon my thorough knowledge of the Duke and those who would be apt to be in league with him.

"The real difficulty would begin *after* I had gained the circle. To be received is one thing; to be taken into the confidence of the plotters quite another, and it was most essential that I should know what was on foot in order to cope with it. I saw only one way of accomplishing this end, and that was to originate a plot that would be obviously superior to any they might have decided upon, and, since all of their moves up to the hour of my joining them had resulted in failure, I felt it reasonable to hope that I could make them adopt the one I intended to propose. And they did, eagerly, for it consisted solely in making use of a secret passage.

"Few palaces of any great age but are cobwebbed with hidden exits and entrances, and I took a chance on this particular one not proving an exception and upon my ability to get such information as would be needed from the King himself. A perfectly natural reticence as to its precise location concealing my ignorance, prior to the night conference with his Majesty, and assuring my inclusion in the assassinating party—since I alone could lead them to it.

"My first words with the King confirmed my hopes. A dozen passages existed and I required only one. In about three hours everything was satisfactorily arranged, with the results that you have just witnessed."

"But why," I questioned, "when you had them so clearly in your power, did you not capture the assassins, instead of going to such pains to let them escape?"

He stopped smoking and looked at me sharply before vouchsafing a reply.

"Are you really as stupid as that?" he grumbled. "Can you not see that our whole success hinged on their getting away convinced that they had succeeded? What else do you think has bothered me about this very ordinary affair? Why, if one man had been arrested and the plot detected, every minute that stretches between this hour and the time set for the wedding would have been filled with deadly peril. At the last moment they would have stopped at nothing and the life of the King would not have been worth the snap of a finger. There was only one way to save him—that I saw at once—and that was to have them appear to succeed.

"At this minute the news of the King's death is reaching the ears of those most interested. Everything is being done to color the belief that the King is no more. The court physician has been hurried from his bed and brought to the palace, the bells of San Sebastian are being tolled, and the streets are patroled with mounted soldiers. By morning there won't be a conspirator within twenty miles of the frontier. Their work completed, they will have scattered like chaff before the wind!"

"And the Duke?" I asked apologetically.

"He ought to be closeted with our friend the Minister of State by now," smiled Bentham, looking at his watch. "The summons to come to the palace must have found him expectant, and the news of his Majesty's death brought him jubilant. I'll bet he will be on his way to the frontier under heavy guard before he realizes the truth."

"And then?"

Bentham threw back his head and laughed long and loudly.

"Then," he grinned, "you'll have to look out for him. He and Stanikoff will want your blood, I am afraid."

"My blood!" I stammered.

"Exactly!" he continued, still shaking with laughter. "I succeeded in making them both think you were the much-to-be-feared Bentham in one of his extraordinary disguises and they have literally camped on your trail!"

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The Mob and Mandy

by Dudley Glass*

CRASHING out of the cane-brake and into the big road, the posse turned toward Thompkinsville and the jail. Their horses, more used to plow-gear than the saddle, stumbled lazily through the sand, their dragging hoofs stirring a cloud of dust which quickly settled in their wake. The dogs, long-eared, good-natured hounds, paced lumberingly at the end of a plow-line, their tongues dripping from their long chase over the wire-grass and through the swamp.

Old Bullet, veteran of the pack, paused frequently to reach behind an ear for a tormenting flea, but the rope persistently dragged him from his three remaining feet before he had routed the enemy.

Behind the dogs rode Columbus Hook, sheriff of Burr County, slouching in his saddle, his three hundred pounds melting visibly under the August sun. His hat, a sun-browned cone of battered felt, flapped unheeded about his ears; his faded blue shirt, collarless and threadbare, stretched tight across the curve of his swaying paunch and disappeared into trousers cut far too economically for his bulk.

Their hems climbed nearer to his knees with every lurch of the stumbling horse, exposing the coarse knitted socks which fell limply over the dust-covered brogans. Lum Hook was longing for the cool shadow of the jail, or the bench beneath the water-oak in the court-house yard, with perhaps a round at pitching horseshoes when the sun went down. This riding over rough ground is hot work for a fat man.

A rifle was balanced across the sheriff's saddle and a rope ran from its pommel, but not to the collars of the tired hounds. A deputy held their leash, but the sheriff's rope led to the neck of a negro who slouched along the road, shambling from side to side as his knees threatened to give way, the sun beating down upon his close-cropped head. His hands were tied behind his back; his legs shackled with a bit of rope which cut short his steps and made a dash for liberty impossible. His bare feet, slashed in his course through the cane-brake, left spots of blood on the sand. He mumbled incessantly in an unintelligible monotone, breaking at intervals into an appeal to the posse.

"Don't let 'em kill me, Marse Lum! I ain't done nuthin'. Don't let 'em git me,

* See page 411.

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Marse Lum. I ain't done nuthin'. Don't let 'em kill me!"

"Keep a-movin' right along, Bud. They ain't nobody goin' kill you less'n the judge says so. You'll be safe in jail in less'n no time. Won't he, boys?"

The sheriff turned heavily in his saddle to lay the matter before his posse. Perhaps he feared the news of his capture had preceded him to Thompkinsville. Perhaps some of Charley Poynter's kinfolk would meet them at the edge of the town. That would be bad for the prisoner, but what could half a dozen men do against a mob? The law didn't expect a sheriff to kill a lot of good people just to save a nigger, when the law would hang him a month later. That wouldn't be reasonable.

Cicero Sparks, deputy, rode forward to the prisoner's side.

"Look a-here, Bud," he demanded aggressively, "if you didn't kill Charley Poynter how come you was runnin' through the swamp? How come them dawgs picked up your trail right by Poynter's field and kep' it till they treed you? How come you been a-hidin' out since sun-up? Tell it to me straight, nigger. Talk up!"

The negro turned on the deputy, his face a dirty gray, the sweat of terror pouring from his forehead.

"I done tole you, Marse Cic'ro," he sobbed, choking and gulping in frantic effort to explain. "I stole er ham f'um Mis' Poynter's smoke-house and da's why I'se hidin' out. I heers de dawgs comin' and I tuck out th'oo de swamp. Da's why I'se runnin'. But I ain't killed nobody. 'Fore God, I ain't!"

"Let the nigger alone, Sis," said the sheriff good-naturedly. "He kin tell that to the jury, and maybe some of them jackleg lawyers kin make 'em believe it. Bill Stallings seen Poynter quoilin' with a nigger las' night who he thinks did the killin', and he kin swear whuther it was Bud or not. Thar's the jail in sight and we ain't met up with no trouble so fur."

"They'll be getherin' to-night, I reckon," said Sparks. "Poynter's got lots of kin hereabouts. Goin' try to stand 'em off, Lum?"

The sheriff spat carefully at a leaf in the sandy road.

"Shucks!" he protested drawlingly. "They ain't none of these boys goin' take the law in they own hands that-a-way. Anyways, I got a summons to Jeemstown to-night and they ain't no way to git out'n it. Wouldn't do fur me to git mixed up in trouble nohow, if the boys should take a notion to act bad. I couldn't hold a mob out'n that old jail, no way. But don't let on to Mandy. Reckon I've got to kinder slip off f'um her."

PONCE DE LEON HOOK, aged nine, was teasing a pointer pup in the yard when the cavalcade drew rein, but he abandoned his yelping playmate to run to the rusty gate. One would never have thought the weather-beaten brick house, half hidden in ivy, flanked by roses and crimson ramblers, a cradle sheltered by its vine-clad veranda, was the bastile of Burr County. But this was the front view, home of the sheriff by virtue of his office. The cells, a double row of mildewed closets, barred at their windows, unventilated, ill-smelling, formed a wing at the rear.

The slumbers of Mrs. Hook were as often broken by the frenzies of an insane prisoner as by the shriller wailing of Gin'ral Oglethorpe, youngest scion of the house of Hook, now sucking a sugar-rag in his cradle and oblivious of the universe.

"Run, Poncy, and tell your mammy to fetch the keys," shouted the sheriff. "Got a nigger to lock up agin his trial."

It wasn't an artist's model or a modiste's dream who appeared when the front door opened. Mandy Hook was thin as a rail, her back bent with stooping over wash-tub and cradle, her angular figure as innocent of corset as her tanned cheeks of cosmetics. Her hair, drawn tightly over her forehead and held in place by a celluloid comb, was beginning to show gray here and there.

But the eyes that peered from beneath the shadowing sunbonnet were black and sparkling, and the lips had a bit of a turn that betrayed a spark of humor. She had lived ten years with Columbus Hook and she needed it.

Mandy shifted her young-hickory snuff-stick to the other corner of her mouth, smoothed the clean striped apron that concealed a bag-like skirt, and pushed the pointer off the steps with her broom.

"What's this boy been doin'?" she asked of her spouse, as he led the way toward the cells.

"He's 'cused of murderin' Charley Poyn-

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ter down at Pine Top," he explained. "The dawgs trailed him from Poynter's cotton-patch."

"He don't look to me like a bad boy," commented Mrs. Hook. "Jes' a common cotton-pickin', cawn-field nigger. Not more'n half-growed, at that. But you can't tell about niggers."

NEWS travels fast in the pine woods, carried by horsemen going home from the county seat; by swift-footed negroes pausing to gossip with every friend in the big road. The moon was just rising when the riders began to gather by Peavy's mill, just beyond the covered bridge leading into the town.

Lum Hook had saddled his horse and ridden away to Jamestown as twilight approached, slipping away past the barn while Mandy was too busy putting the children to bed to notice his departure.

"Good-fur-nothin' hound," she remarked to herself when she missed him. "He's afeerd to try to keep that crowd out'n the jail and afeerd not to. Well, I ain't afeerd. They ain't no man in Burr County goin' lay finger on a woman, and they'll shore have trouble gittin' in here past me."

She took the sheriff's rifle from its rack, looked it over in doubt and put it aside for a double-barreled shotgun.

"Liable to hit somethin' with this," she remarked. "But I hopes I won't have to do no shootin'."

She leaned the gun against the wall and went on knitting a sock while she mechanically rocked the cradle and crooned one of the camp-meeting hymns which had been the lullaby of generations of Georgia children.

Nearly a hundred men and boys were waiting at the mill now, talking in little clusters, debating whether it were better to storm the jail with a log as a battering-ram or lure the sheriff away with some plea of official business and thus provide him with a convenient alibi. Some wore masks of handkerchiefs in which holes for their eyes had been roughly torn; one had a monster stocking pulled down over his head, its foot trailing behind like Punchinello's cap; all wore their hats well over their foreheads. But there was no attempt to conceal their identity from one another. All they desired was that the sheriff might swear, if necessary, that he had not recognized a man in the mob.

Perhaps half of the number were half-grown boys, following their elders in the hope of excitement and visibly nervous, though they talked loudly of lynchings and the best way to handle them. They were waiting until the stores should close and the prayer-meeting in the little union church "break up." Then they would do their work, yell a bit and go home again. There might be a grand jury investigation and a "ringing charge against lawlessness" from the judge, but nobody would go to jail "just for lynching a nigger."

The voice of the traveling evangelist across the river rose in a final appeal to sinners and died away. The voices of the singers reached a shrill crescendo and hushed. One by one the lights of the little town were extinguished. Soon there was slumber over Thompkinsville.

"Time to be movin', boys," said a tall horseman, his black beard struggling from behind his mask. Every man there knew him as Amos Watkins, one of the boy-colonels who had followed Gordon to the war, cousin to the murdered Poynter. They accepted him as their leader and began to mount.

The clatter of hoofs on the covered bridge aroused Mandy Hook from her knitting.

"Reckon they're comin'," she remarked. "'Pears to be a right smart passel of 'em, too."

Mandy blew out her smoking lamp and went to the window. She could see them sweep into the quiet road and halt in front of the jail. Most of them remained in their saddles, but a half-dozen gave their bridles to others and came briskly down the walk. A heavy fist hammered at the door.

"Hello!" yelled the leader. "Lum Hook! You, Lum! Come out here. Want to see you."

The muzzles of the shotgun slid through the window by his head.

"Git off'n them steps and out'n my yard!" said a woman's voice. "You're seekin' trouble."

Here was a surprise. The lynching was not going through according to program. Why couldn't Sheriff Hook come out to argue and be overpowered, like a gentleman? But the half-dozen got off the steps.

"Look a-here, Mandy Hook," shouted one in the foreground, in aggrieved tones, "you put that gun up 'fore it goes off and

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shoots somebody. We've come fur that nigger and we're goin' to have him."

"Come in and git him then, Bill Hillbrook," retorted Mandy. "That handkercher don't hide them bow legs of yourn."

Mr. Hillbrook retired, abashed. A laugh arose from the road.

"It's no use, Mandy," said Watkins. "You can't stop us, and you don't want to shoot none of us. We kin bust the door down, easy."

Mandy hesitated. She knew Watkins's voice and began to fear trouble. He had proved his courage when he had helped the sheriff catch the Beasley gang, bringing in two dead and five wounded. He wouldn't be bluffed by a shotgun. She knew, too, that Watkins could control the mob, unruly as it might have grown. If she could handle him, the others would not matter.

"Git away from that door and I'll come out," she called. She put aside her weapon, lighted the lamp in the hall, and threw open the door. For a moment she faced the mob in the moonlight.

"I see Ame Watkins is leadin' you," she remarked. "Well, I ain't afeerd of Ame Watkins or the whole kit-and-bilin' of you. But I ain't goin' to have no mob of menfolks trampin' up my clean floors. If Ame wants the nigger let him come in and git him. Does that suit?"

"Let Ame git him!" shouted a dozen. It was the easiest way out of trouble. "Ame kin handle him by hisself."

MANDY closed the door when Watkins had entered, dropped the bar into its socket and led the way back to the cells. The negro, crouching in a corner and moaning in a delirium of fear, sprang to his feet as the light shone in his eyes and stood trembling against the bars. He knew Watkins at once, for the leader has cast aside his worthless mask.

"Oh, Marse Ame, you won't let 'em kill me, will you, Marse Ame?" he begged. "You know me, Marse Ame. I'se Bud Jackson, what wu'ked fur you las' Summer. You knows me, Marse Ame. I done tuck keer of your little boy when he down wid fever. I makes him cane whistles, Marse Ame. Your little boy know me. I ain't a bad nigger, Marse Ame. Jes' stole a ham f'um Mis' Poynter. Da's all, Marse Ame. Jes' stole a ham." He slid to the floor of the cell and began sobbing violently. He felt there was no hope left for him now.

"Thar he is, Ame Watkins," said Mandy. "Just a poor cotton-field nigger that you knows well. I don't believe he killed Poynter anyhow, and if he did, the law will hang him. They ain't no use in your mob doin' it. But if you're boun' to have his life tonight, go on and take it. Thar he is. But you can't take him out'n this jail. Kill him right here and right now."

Watkins looked at her in amazement. The sheriff's wife took a key from its ring and tossed it between the bars. It fell clanging to the floor, beyond the reach of any beside the prisoner.

"When C'lumbus Hook was 'lected sheriff, he swore on the Book he'd keep his prisoners in jail," she said. "Lum ain't here, but it falls on me to keep his word fur him. If you're 'bliged to kill the nigger, thar he is. You've got a pistol in your hand. Take it and shoot him down. He's helpless and waitin'."

"Why, Mandy Hook," returned the bewildered Watkins, "you don't 'spect me to commit murder in cole blood, like that? Think I'm goin' to stand up and kill a man what ain't got no chance, and him locked up in a cell? Open that door. I'm goin' to take him outside to the boys."

"The key's done past reachin'," said Mandy. "Go on and do your lynchin'. Is that nigger any more helpless in that cell than he would be in that gang of wolves waitin' out thar in the road? Is it any more murder for you to pull that trigger than pull a rope at the bridge? If you need a hundred men at your back to kill a poor nigger, you're a heap bigger coward than I'd have fur a man. If you ain't goin' to do somethin', git out'n this jail and call off them dawgs."

Watkins turned and strode toward the door. As he faced the mob in the moonlight there arose a storm of questions. He walked on to the gate.

"There ain't goin' to be no lynchin' tonight," he said. "I got good reasons fur changin' my mind."

A murmur of protest broke over the crowd. Watkins threw his head back and walked close to the nearest man.

"If any man don't like what I say, let him step out and tell me about it!" he challenged ominously. One of the riders twitched his bridle and turned his horse toward the river. Watkins watched them all out of sight before he mounted and followed.

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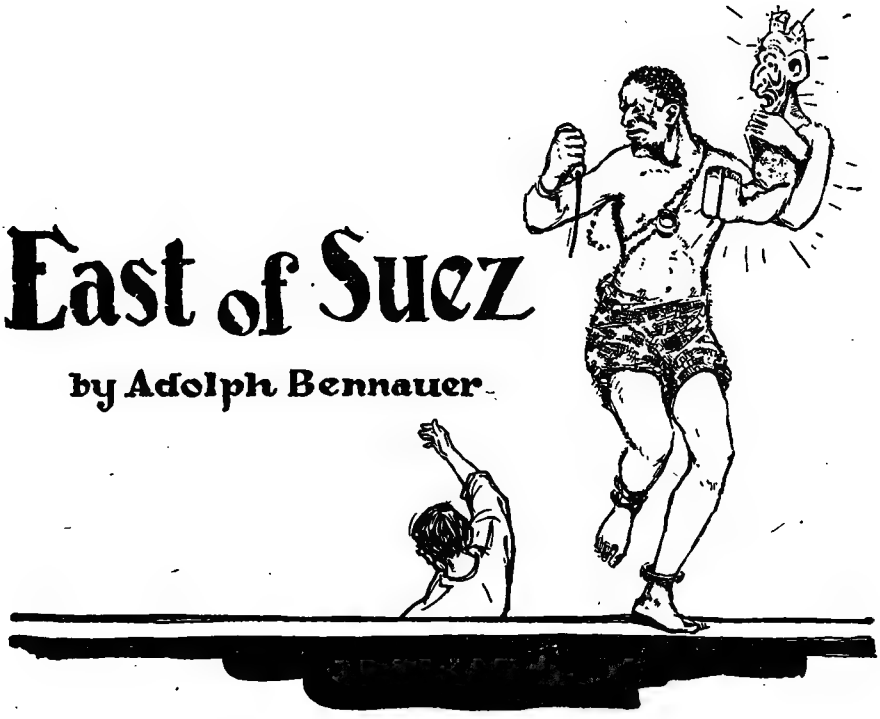
A HALF-HOUR later the sheriff of Burr County climbed wearily out of his saddle and turned his tired horse into the barn-yard.

"They've done caught the nigger what killed Poynter, down to'ards Bullhead," he explained to Mrs. Hook. "They've tuck him to the city for safe-keepin', on the train. Had any trouble, Mandy?" he asked.

Mrs. Hook looked him over from hat to toes. He shuffled his great feet nervously on the floor.

"No trouble to speak of," said Mandy. "You take off them squeaky shoes and go rock little Gin'ral Oglethorpe. I think he's cuttin' a tooth."



East of Suez

by Adolph Bennauer

I WAS out of a ship and had become stranded in Malaysia, and when Captain Heinrich Dinklemeyer found me I was sitting at a table in one of Singapore's celebrated dives, staring moodily at the bottom of a wine-glass where, in liquid form, had gone my last bit of money. I was not aware of the Captain's presence till he reached a hand across the table and shook me by the shoulder. Then, in a sleepy sort of way, I noted that he was a short, broad, hairy man with spectacles. Also, that grip on my shoulder told me that he had enormous strength.

"You vas oudt of a ship, aindt id?" he whispered hoarsely.

I nodded drowsily and tried to brace up, for I realized that here was probably my last chance to get away from these climes.

"Und you vould take der furst bert' vot offered?" His little pig-like eyes appraised me stealthily.

"Yes, sir," I announced decisively. I arose, with difficulty, to a sitting posture. "And that, though I've got a first mate's certificate in my pocket."

His eyes widened. "So? Den I gan use you yet besser. You know navigation?"

"I do," I replied quickly, "but I'm not much up on the Java seas."

He waved a ponderous hand indifferently. "Nefer mind. You vill gome apoard der *Lucille* dis afternoon und sign der ardicles as mate. V'ere ve iss bound, you don't inguire."

I gulped down my joy and nodded mechanically. He signaled a waiter and we

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drank each other's health. Then he left me, with the injunction to be sure and be aboard by two o'clock.

I found the *Lucille* lying beside a rotten wharf at the north end of town. She was a dainty, clipper-built schooner of two hundred tons, flush fore and aft. When I clambered aboard I found a crew of ten white men stretched out in the bows. I stared at them in surprise; not because they were drunk, but because they were all whites. Down in those parts, where you can hire a Malay crew for a whole month for little more than a white man demands per week, it is usual for vessels fitting out at Singapore to ship the natives.

But my surprise was short-lived. I heard a prodigious puffing and creaking behind me and Captain Dinklemeyer came wallowing forward along the planking.

"So," he remarked expressively, smiling blandly at me over his spectacles. "Gome below, Mr. McTavish, und ve vill talk pusiness, und, maybe, haff a glass of schnapps."

When I was seated in a cane-bottomed chair in his cabin, a cigar between my lips, a glass at my elbow, he took down a chart of the Malay Archipelago and spread it out upon the table.

"Pefore you sign der ardicles, Mr. McTavish," he grunted, "I vill giff you a prief oudtline of der drip. Ve start, you see, *von* Singapore, und run sout'east to Mintow. At Mintow ve sthop avhile; maybe vun day, maybe t'ree—id all depends. V'at ve do dere, you don't inguire. Den, if ve haff been suggsessful, ve keep on to Macassar, shange to a stheamer, und run *schnell zu* Melbourne. I dell you diss," he concluded, as he refolded the chart, "so dat if anyding happens to me at Mintow you vill dake charge of der *Lucille*."

"I see," I returned. "But couldn't you save a lot of trouble by letting me in on it now?"

For a moment his fishy, absolutely expressionless eyes surveyed me. Then he wagged his jelly-like head slowly.

"*Nein*, I haff seen doo much of der vorld, Mr. McTavish."

I laughed and dismissed the matter with a shrug. "And now, Captain," I remarked, as soon as I had signed the papers, "when do I lick that hell-raked crew into shape and get them started?"

"So soon as I giff der vord," he explained. "Und dot vill pe at der fall of night."

ACCORDINGLY, at eight bells he ordered us to cast off. By that time, most of the crew were awake and I could see with half an eye that it would be war between us all the way to Melbourne. They were the scourings of Singapore and Bangkok and Banjermassin, men who had deserted their ships at these ports for murder or worse and who had primarily fled from the convict squads of Australia.

I slipped a gun into my pocket and went forward. But I had no occasion to use it. The men seemed to have as much interest in the enterprise as the skipper and showed willing enough. The only trouble was that my authority went by the board. They obeyed my orders after their own fashion, as quickly or as tardily as they chose. As I had no mind to lose my life, unless in self-defense, I forebore reminding them of our relative positions and swallowed the indignity in silence.

All the way down the Carimata Straits we didn't touch a brace nor a sheet, and if it hadn't been that the hands would have grown overlazy with nothing at all to do we could have lashed the wheel and let the *Lucille* steer herself. There wasn't any breeze, there was hardly any air, and the sea was black and foul and stunk, and native junks floated past us like toy boats in a rain-puddle. We were never completely out of sight of land, for as soon as we'd lose one of the islands astern another would pop up over the bow.

Of an evening when darkness had fallen we dropped anchor in Mintow Bay. The skipper and I leaned over the taffrail and gazed shoreward, to where the pin-point lights of the quaint little city blinked sleepily along the water-front.

"I only hope," sighed Dinklemeyer, "dot to-morrow night vill pe so bleasant as diss. Und I could vish dot id vould pe chust a leedle bit darker."

"Who goes ashore, skipper?" I asked. "Made any preparations yet?"

It was the first time I had referred to the matter since leaving Singapore, but now that the affair was approaching a climax, I could not conceal my impatience.

He stared at me over the rims of his spectacles, while he pressed the tobacco down into the bowl of his pipe.

"I go ashore myself, Mr. McTavish," he growled, "und I dake half der crew. Der

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odder half remains apoard mit you."

I smoked on, for a time, in silence.

"I don't see how it is, Captain," I blurted, "that you are willing to put implicit confidence in those rascals forward and yet are afraid to trust me."

He chuckled softly. "I vould nod pe imbatient, Mr. McTavish," he admonished. "Py und py, if ve haff been suggsessful, you shall know all. Oddervise, w'y should you know anydings? As for dose men forvard, id vas nod I who trusted dem; id vas dem who trusted *me*."

"I get you, Captain," I returned sheepishly. "I've been as blind as a bat."

After that I held my peace. A quiet land breeze started up just then and from time to time it brought to our ears the tinkle of the age-worn temple bells, and it didn't take much imagination to picture those bare-legged heathen kneeling in mute worship on the cold stone floor. The breeze had a funny, musty odor in it, too, that smacked of the East, and it came to me as a kind of warning when I thought of our mysterious errand.

Through the succeeding day I paced and smoked and continually glanced shoreward. The crew and Dinklemeyer slept. Night came down as black as a pocket. Overhead a single star sputtered weakly. The air about us hung thick and dead and sweet. To the north lay the land, a low black smudge against the sky-line. Out in the bay a few lights, scattered here and there, displayed the ships at anchor.

AT MIDNIGHT the party left, and save for the slumbering watchman I was alone on deck. I leaned over the starboard rail for a time, gazing intently shoreward and harkening for the first faint splash of oars. We had put out our lights and rode dark, fore and aft. Also, our anchor was just holding. An hour passed—two, and still the skipper and the men had not returned. I was about to light my fourth pipeful when suddenly I bent forward and listened. It was the skipper, right enough. Two minutes later their boat bumped against the *Lucille's* swelling side.

"Ahoy dere, McTavish, pass down a rope," whispered Dinklemeyer, in that hurricane breath of his.

As I ran to obey I wondered at the excitement in his voice, for he was a man not easily stirred. I hurried back with my heart in my throat and tossed the rope down to him. The next moment I was hauling away for dear life, for there was a weighty little bundle at the other end. Dinklemeyer was breathing curses on the darkness of the night and urging me to handle it carefully. I couldn't get a look at it, for it was wrapped up in the skipper's blouse. Nor did Dinklemeyer give me time. The next moment he was growling for the men to lay aft and lend a hand to their shipmates, who were groaning in the boat below. Five had left the vessel and only three returned, and of those three there wasn't one who hadn't felt the bite of a Malay's knife.

Hardly had we got them below than the shore began to be alive with lights. They seemed to be flashing out everywhere. Bells started ringing, and from here and there came the muffled beating of tom-toms and kettle-drums. Dinklemeyer ordered us to cut the cable and run for it. Fortunate was it that he had taken but half the crew ashore. That left us five able-bodied men, besides myself, to work the vessel. He, himself, was too weak from loss of blood to be of any service, so he gave me charge of the *Lucille* and went below with the bundle.

By daylight we had put forty miles between us and Mintow Bay. Only then did I begin to draw my breath freely. Our wounded had been attended to the night before and we found that none of them was seriously injured. Grim, tough-looking customers they were—men who looked as if they might have come unscathed through any kind of a brawl. Two they had left behind them at Mintow, but for all the concern they affected on this account the depletion in their numbers might not have been unwelcome.

That forenoon I accosted Dinklemeyer on the quarter-deck.

"Well, we're out of it," I cried heartily. "If it wasn't for an overpowering curiosity, I might be able to sleep now."

His mild blue eyes stared at me through swathes of bandages.

"Ah, but I vouldn't pe too sure, McTavish," he cautioned. "Nod yet are ve oudt of danger. Dose yellow devils vill pe on our drack to-morrow."

"Why, what would they want to do that for?" I demanded suspiciously.

He grinned and shook his head forebo-

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dingly. "Nefer you mind, for v'y. But I bet you ve hear from dem yet. Any day ve must be brebared."

I DIDN'T heed his words then; I thought we were well clear of the mess; but two days later his prediction came true. We rolled on an oily sea; there wasn't abreath of wind. I had just come on deck for the morning watch and as usual had scanned the horizon for any signs of a ship. Far away to the south loomed the sail of a native junk, swaying back and forth and poising silently in the air like the wing of a butterfly. It didn't bother me any, but, as in duty bound, I reported it to the skipper. He was just eating breakfast and he set down his knife and fork and stared at me with a whitish face.

"Und der iss *kein* vind?" he asked anxiously.

I told him no, but that it would freshen in an hour or two.

"*Himmel!*" he ejaculated, "I hope dot iss so."

He finished his breakfast at a gulp and followed me on deck. For a long time he surveyed the junk, shaking his head ponderously the while. Then he closed the telescope with a snap and turned his fishy blue eyes up to mine.

"Go forvard, Mr. McTavish, und see dot arms iss served oudt to der men."

With a little of his fear in my own heart, I obeyed. But the men received the news joyously. The half of them that had not yet seen active service were stagnating with idleness and broiling for a fight; the others were anxious to even up scores. It did my heart good to watch those jail-birds spit on the palms of their hands and make their cutlasses *si-ing* through the air. They were all fighters, every man-jack of them, and they did not know the meaning of fear.

That breeze was mighty slow in coming, but not so with the junk. As the time dragged on, she crawled nearer and nearer, propelled by sweeps. An hour from the moment we first sighted her she was not three ship's-lengths away. Her deck was teeming with Malays—small, brown fellows, armed with bell-mouthed guns and long, wicked-looking machetes. Evidently they intended to board us from the stern, seeing that we were a low ship, so we crowded aft to meet them, each man armed with a cutlass and a gun. A moment later their port bow collided with our counter and grapnels were flung dexterously into our rigging.

But we didn't wait for them to get a toe over the bulwarks. As fast as they came up the side those jailbirds of ours mowed them down. That part of the ship began to look like a slaughter-house. The Malays were game to the last. Maybe they didn't know what gameness meant, but they fought till they died. And they were giving us a-plenty, too. Four of our men were groaning underfoot already and the rest of us were smarting from a score of wounds. The fight might have ended differently if a breeze hadn't sprung up just then. I felt it first, on the tip of a blood-stained finger. It grew stronger and stronger. The grapnels in our rigging parted and the junk fell astern. A concentrated rush drove overboard the few heathen that were clinging to the rail, and we were free.

We didn't stop to count our dead. Those of us who had any life remaining sprang forward and began hauling on sheets and braces. As the *Lucille* filled away I leaped to the wheel. The gurgle of water under the bows came like music to my ears. Meanwhile the rest of the crew were pitching overboard the dead Malays. When the deck had been cleared we found that we had five killed and the remainder grievously wounded. Dinklemeyer grinned as he passed me at the wheel.

BUT two days later, except that we went about looking like hospital convalescents, you wouldn't have known that anything out of the ordinary had happened. The men were quite cheerful about it. They were not the kind who mourn long over a dead shipmate, and as we had the prize safe they were satisfied. From here we laid a straight course for Macassar, where the skipper intended to transfer to the steamer. In that way we should throw the Malays off the track and make better time down to Melbourne.

Then, one day, we met with an incident that often befalls the navigator in those seas. We picked up a boat adrift, off the Carimon Islands, with a starved, sun-baked Malay in the bottom. More out of curiosity than humanity, we took him aboard and stowed him away in the forepeak, and beyond giving him a little water, left him wholly to himself. He was so thin when we took him aboard that you could see his

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bones shining through his skin and we didn't even care to lay bets about his recovery. But in two days he came staggering up the companion-ladder, hunting for more water. He spied the scuttle-butt, bore down upon it and didn't stop drinking till he'd swelled out like a toad.

Dinklemeyer came on deck just then and took notice of him. He turned his pig-like eyes up to mine and grinned.

"Ve haff no passenger list apoard der *Lucille*," he grunted, "und I need a steward, pad."

Upon which he went forward and sing-songed for a moment with the man in his native tongue. The outcome of it was that the Malay was hired on the spot. He was grateful to us for having saved his life and he worked hard to pay up the debt.

I was busy on deck one day, superintending the splicing of a crippled boom, when I was startled by the sound of an oath from the cabin. A crash and a heathenish scream followed, and the next moment the Malay steward came flying up the companionway. His eyes were flashing like a maniac's, he fairly foamed at the lips, and under one arm he bore our mysterious booty—a golden, diamond-studded idol!

"*Himmel!* Sthop him! Sthop him!" bellowed the skipper from below. He shook the ship as he tore his way up the companion.

That brought me out of my stupefaction. I caught up a belaying-pin and darted aft. But the skipper was before me. His big bulk shot out of the companionway and hurled itself like a thunderbolt upon the little brown man. But the Malay didn't mean to be caught. With a wolfish snarl he whipped out one of those long, snaky knives and drove it straight into the skipper's groin. Down went the old man as if he'd been shot. The next minute I was atop of the nigger.

I'd hardly got my hands on him before he gave a slippery little twist and was out of my clutches and running for the side.

"Here! Stop him!" I yelled.

But we were too late. Before we had covered a yard he was standing poised on the weather rail. With a piercing little squeal he pressed the idol to his heart and the next moment hit the water at the end of a beautiful parabolic curve.

For a moment we stood there, staring tragically at the spot where he had gone down. Then, with a bitter curse, two men flung aft to carry the dead skipper below.

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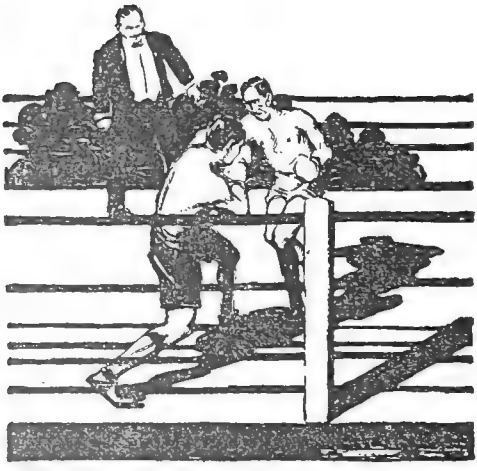

The Second Rung

Billy Blain climbs one step higher in the fighting game.

by Walter Galt

WINNING one fight in New York City was a good beginning, but it did not make a fireman into a popular idol, and Billy Blain had sense enough to know it. So when the tramp steamer *Diogenes* wallowed and rolled on her eight-knot-an-hour course homeward again from New Orleans, Billy was still toiling in the blazing bowels of her with a shovel and a slicer. He was black as the ace of spades, but cheerful. The fierce heat from the clanging fire-doors scorched his legs, and the cold draft down the ventilators chilled him; but he was putting on muscle rapidly, and the good clean sea air that he breathed during his intervals on deck put new life into him.

Chief Engineer O'Hanlon spared him nothing in the way of work, for when steam was up and the engine-room hummed and simmered to the throb of it, the chief was a martinet—quite a different man from the dissolute follower of fights who lost his hard-earned money so regularly between trips. Ashore he was "Terence, old sport," to nearly every one, but down in his engine-room he was "Mister O'Hanlon," and that engine-room was as clean and well-looked-after and up-to-the-minute as any on the coast.

When Billy had vanquished Sullivan, and had won good money for himself and O'Hanlon, the idea had come into his head that his next trip on the *Diogenes* would be rather in the nature of a holiday, and the fact that he was promoted from coal-passer to fireman had tended to strengthen the idea. After the fight he had walked back to the ship arm-in-arm between the Skipper and O'Hanlon, and the three had been as familiar as lifelong friends; but the next morning, when he turned up according to orders to do odd jobs around the engine-room, he had ventured to "sass" O'Hanlon, and the nature and the full enormity of his offense were borne in upon him promptly.

O'Hanlon stood still and glared at him for half a minute, wiping his perfectly clean hands on a piece of cotton-waste as he always did when there was trouble brewing.

"Turn to and work, darn ye!" he ordered. "Think this is a prize-ring, or what? Get up there and clean those cylinder-covers till you can see your face in them, and look sharp about it!"

There was nothing to prevent Billy from walking straight off the ship had he chosen to, and he had never in his life been disciplined by any one; but he looked once at O'Hanlon, and then went up the iron ladder to do his bidding, and he liked the chief engineer just that much better for standing

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no nonsense. The chief engineer looked after him and grinned.

"I'll make a man o' you, ye little shrimp!" he muttered.

But Billy Blain was a man already, and was possessed of a man's ambition. He had set that sturdy little jaw of his and determined grimly to "make good" at the fighting game, and he knew that muscle was what he needed most; so he put all his energy, and all the patience that had been hammered into him in long-drawn fights in the day when he had been a lightweight, into the endless irritating jobs of work that O'Hanlon found for him.

And O'Hanlon watched him, and grinned —when Billy's back was turned; to his face he was nothing but a discontented tyrant, fretting and fuming over the alleged filth of the engine-room.

EVEN when the ship started for New Orleans again, and the endless routine of watch and watch began, Billy got little mercy. The other men did their trick of firing or passing coal, and then turned in; Billy did his trick, shoveling and sweating with the rest of them, and when his four hours were up was promptly set to doing other things.

"Eight hours' sleep are enough for any man!" O'Hanlon would growl at him. "Turn to and file them brasses!"

"What in —— d'you stand it for?" one of the other firemen asked him one evening in the dog watch. "You signed on for fireman, didn't you? He's makin' you do fireman an' fitter an' oiler, and pretty near every darned thing on the ship! He wouldn't play me for a sucker that way!"

Billy had begun to think himself that he was getting a little bit too much of it, but the other firemen's sympathy was a thing he could not tolerate; he had not been built that way.

"You tryin' to run the ship?" he demanded. "What's it got to do with you?"

"Aw, nothin'!" said the fireman, who happened to have seen him fight and was a wise man after his own fashion.

Of course after that there was nothing for it but to wade into the extra work and pretend he liked it, and the direct consequence was just what the engineer intended—Billy's muscles swelled and hardened until they stood out like knotted cords on his arms and chest.

There was no chance of his getting muscle-bound, for the chief displayed the most amazing ingenuity in varying the different tasks assigned him; the engine-room of a steamer, and especially of a tramp steamer, is a hallelujah-hole of odd jobs, every one of which needs strength and patience, and O'Hanlon ran through the whole gamut of them for Billy's benefit.

And he saw to the feeding of his charge himself, making him eat at his own table after he himself had finished, and watching every mouthful that he swallowed with the eye of an expert.

"Eat, darn ye!" he ordered. "Eat, and chew it more! Eat all ye like; I'll work it out o' ye again!"

So Billy toiled like a demon, and ate like a wolf, and put on so much muscle that he all but satisfied O'Hanlon.

The chief wrote letters from New Orleans—any number of them—sitting cross-legged at his cabin table, bored and bad-tempered. Like many another useful member of society, he hated writing, but these letters were to various fight-promoters and managers that he knew, and, in his new capacity of trainer and manager combined, it seemed good to him to write them.

"I'll have a daisy of a fight ready waiting for ye when we reach New York," he told Billy. "I've written every single man in the game I know! I've writer's cramp in every joint of me from the ankles upward, an' I loathe the sight of ink, but 'twas worth it! There'll be ten fights waitin' for us when we reach New York, or I'll eat my hat!"

It is on record that O'Hanlon never did eat his hat, though he would probably have tried to had Billy held him to it. Billy had a shrewd idea at the time that getting battles was not quite such an easy matter as O'Hanlon seemed to think; he knew well enough that if fights could be arranged by merely writing letters, the men who fought them would not be such fools as to divide their precarious profits with managers.

But no possible good could come of trying to advise O'Hanlon while his ship was still out of her home port, and Billy knew it; so he just said "Good for you, sir!" and went back to work again. Down inside him, though, he had a fixed idea that there would be more trouble than the chief anticipated when they did reach New York again.

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The Skipper was not so well advised as Billy. He tried to interfere and give advice, gently and gingerly, but quite persistently. He rigged up a punching-bag away aft on the poop, and had Billy up to punch it in the dog watch.

"What he needs is speed," said the Skipper, watching him.

"Rot!" said O'Hanlon, who never agreed with any one on board ship if he could help it. "Muscle's what he wants! He'll get that in the engine-room."

Billy knew better than either of them what he wanted, and he punched the bag and skipped with a piece of insulated wire whenever he could get the time to do it. The Skipper watched him delightedly and encouraged him, and O'Hanlon, who hated interference, got sore as a bear about it.

In the end he and the Skipper came very close to quarreling, and when the ship reached New York again there was a very decided coolness between them. O'Hanlon bragged at meal-times of the wonders he would work with Billy when the time came, and of the ease he would have in getting fights for him, to all of which the Skipper answered nothing.

"If you take my advice——" he suggested, though, when O'Hanlon had finished.

"I don't need any one's advice," the engineer growled back at him.

"All the same," said the Skipper, "I'll give you some: Keep sober, Terence, when you go ashore! There are more crooks in the fighting game than in any other, and if you get drunk, they'll take advantage of you!"

Drink was O'Hanlon's one weak point, and every one who knew him, including himself, was aware of it. He resented any allusion to it, though. He growled his answer somewhere down into his beard, and the breach between him and the Skipper widened. They were scarcely on speaking terms after that.

SHIPS' engineers are a peculiar race of men; they are hard-headed and resourceful, but cranky on certain points. One of O'Hanlon's little peculiarities was that he would never carry his envelope-ful of indents to the owners' office; he always had a man to do it for him, walking on ahead himself, swaggering importantly along the sidewalk and smoking a cigar; he would rather have lost his job than forego that ceremony. This time he took Billy with him, for he wanted to astound that gentleman with the number of answers that would surely be waiting for him in reply to his letters from New Orleans.

There were absolutely no letters for O'Hanlon, though, and Billy, waiting in the outer office, divined as much the moment the chief came out through the owners' private door.

"Nothin' doin'?" asked Billy.

"Not yet," said O'Hanlon, rage and injured pride and disappointment chasing each other in waves across his face. "Maybe they have watched the shipping news and waited for us to reach port before they answered."

"Don't you believe it!" Billy answered. "They won't fall for no letters, not those jays won't! What they want to see's the color of your money! You better go an' talk to 'em!"

"But, Lord deliver us! D'ye think, ye little runt, that I've got time to trapse around New York and talk to every man I wrote to? There's dozens of them, and every single man jack of them game to talk hot air for a week!"

"Try Geoghan again."

"He's had enough of us, I guess. We've won too much of his money already! I didn't even write to that son-of-a-gun."

"You take my tip and try him!" said Billy. "I know his kind! Think now: When I came to New York with a letter o' recommendation to him, he turned me down hard, didn't he? And I got even, didn't I, by beatin' his man Sullivan? An' then he came an' offered to manage me, didn't he? Remember that? An' what did I tell him? You heard me. I told him to go to ——. Well, it 'ud suit his book fine to take me down a peg or two, an' if he knows a man that he thinks can beat me he'll arrange a match and cover our money—you see if he don't!"

O'Hanlon stood for a moment in the outer office and scratched his head.

"I'll be —— if I don't think you're right!" he said, after a moment. "I'll go try him, anyway. You go back to the ship and wait for me there, so's I'll know where you are in case I want you to talk terms; and see here, Billy, there's no need to tell the Skipper there weren't any letters. I've been buckin' to him a bit about how many there'd be. He'd have the laugh on me if

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he knew, an' you know I'd hate that!"

"Trust me!" said Billy. "Mum's the word!"

So Billy went back to the *Diogenes*, and O'Hanlon set off to track down Geoghan. When Billy walked aboard the ship the Skipper was standing in the gangway.

"Any news, Billy?" he asked him.

"No, sir."

"Where's the chief?"

"Gone up-town to see about a fight, sir."

"Who with?"

"Dunno, sir; he didn't tell me."

"Um-m-m!" said the Skipper; then he muttered something underneath his breath and walked away.

"What in —— did they want to quarrel for!" muttered Billy, looking after him. "There's neither of them knows a thing about the game, but they're both good sports, an' I like 'em! Gawd! What a rum life it is!"

II

GEOGHAN, the fight promoter and manager of pugilists, seemed glad to see O'Hanlon, but he was not apparently enthusiastic about the immediate prospects of a fight. He shook hands cordially enough, and pulled out a cigar and ordered drinks—several drinks in fact; but he seemed to be despondent about the fight game.

"There are too many crooks in the business," he grumbled, "and the fans are getting wise. If I could put on the two best lightweights in America to-morrow, for five thousand a side, I don't believe I'd take enough money at the door to pay expenses!"

"Bah!" said O'Hanlon; "I know better!"

Geoghan winked at him, and helped him to another drink. "It all depends whether you're wise or not," he remarked.

"How d'ye mean—wise?"

"You have to be wise to the game, that's all; then there's money in it, not unless."

"Put me wise!"

"There's only one good drawing-card in New York at the present moment among the welter-weights, Battling Bill Benson."

"All right, fetch along your Battling Bill! My man'll fight him!"

"So'd hundreds of others! There's hardly a man in the fight game who wouldn't take a beating from the Battler for a percentage of the gate receipts!"

"I've got fifteen hundred dollars to bet right here that my man can beat your Battling Bill in less than ten rounds at the welter-weight limit! Now then!"

"The Battler's no fool," said Geoghan; "he's got to be dead sure of winning before he'll fight nowadays. He's got to a stage in the game when he can make more money in vaudeville than he can in the ring, and it's not such hard work; but the minute he gets beaten he'll cease to draw, and he knows it. So he don't intend to get beaten—not just yet awhile. There's only one way to get him into a fight—trap him!"

"How d'ye mean—trap him?"

"Set a trap for him."

"Yes, but how?"

"Show him a plum that he thinks'll be easy picking—your man Billy Blain for instance."

O'Hanlon snorted.

"If the Battler once saw Billy fight," he answered, "he'd know darned well that the little cuss could lick the stuffing out of a car-load of wild tigers! He's no easy picking for any man!"

"All the same," said Geoghan, "the Battler's got to think he's easy picking before he'll fight him. Have another drink—say when."

O'Hanlon pushed his glass along the counter, and lit a fresh cigar.

"I take it the Battler's not crazy?" he remarked.

"He's all there!" said Geoghan. "Very much all there!"

"Then you couldn't make him think that Billy Blain was easy picking."

Geoghan thought it best to change the subject.

"How d'you train your man?" he asked.

"All he wants to eat, and lashings o' hard work!"

"Ah! You've got the secret! Where most of 'em go wrong is in not getting half enough to eat; they spend what little coin they get, and then live off the free-lunch counters till the next fight! Talking of grub, how about dining with me to-night?"

"I'd like to," said O'Hanlon. "What time?"

"Seven o'clock. We might stroll round and have a talk to some of the boys in the meantime."

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"You're on!" said the engineer.

The two men went off together to spend the afternoon. Geoghan talked oilily, and O'Hanlon drank, mixing his drinks indiscriminately in every saloon they entered. When dinner-time came the engineer was distinctly mellow, and Geoghan saw fit to feel his way a little further.

"I'm not exactly the Battler's manager," he said; "he hasn't got any regular manager; he's a sort of free-lance. But I've got more pull with him than most. Supposing I could arrange a match between him and your man Blain for a decent-sized purse, have you got the ready money for a side bet?"

"Fifteen hundred!" said O'Hanlon.

"Real money?"

"Got it in my pocket now!"

GEOGHAN poured him out another drink, and grew thoughtful. Fifteen hundred dollars was not a despicable sum; even part of it was worth trying for. He wondered whether the engineer was drunk enough or not.

"There's no knowing," he said presently, with his eyes on O'Hanlon's face; "I might make the Battler see it."

"What's to prevent you? Bring along your Battling Bill What's-his-name, and I'll sign a contract right here and now for my man to knock his block off inside ten rounds or forfeit fifteen hundred! What's simpler?"

"It's not so simple as all that," said Geoghan laughing. "You won't catch the Battler that way; he's too leary. We've got to make him think first that your man can't fight for sour apples."

"You'll never make him think that!" said O'Hanlon; "the little cuss can fight!"

"Has he got a head on his shoulders? Can he think?"

"Got more brains than you and I put together! He's the cutest little cuss I ever set to shoveling coal!"

"Could he stall through a ten-round fight, d'you think?"

"There's nothing in the way o' fighting that he couldn't do!" said O'Hanlon, who was too busy mopping up whisky to understand the purport of the last question.

"If he can do that, there's a chance for him. I've got a welter-weight on my string named Terry Tindle. The Battler beat him to a frazzle less than two months ago; maybe you read about it in the papers?"

O'Hanlon nodded.

"Tindle did his best, and the Battler knows it; he knows, too, that he could beat him again any time he wants to."

"Why on earth don't he do it, then?"

"No money in it. The fans wouldn't pay to see him beat the same man twice running. But supposing Tindle were to beat your man, not badly y'understand, but just get the decision on points—I'd see the referee and fix all that; and supposing the Battler was there to see him do it—I could arrange that too—why, Blain 'ud look like easy picking for the Battler, wouldn't he?"

"You mean you'd square the referee to give the decision against Billy?"

"Not quite so raw as that! Your man 'ud have to stall, and he'd have to do it cleverly too; the referee couldn't do more than help!" Geoghan helped him to some more whisky, and waited a few minutes for the suggestion to sink in.

"Say that again!" said O'Hanlon suddenly.

Geoghan repeated the proposition.

"That's the only way I can think of to catch the Battler," he added.

"But supposin' I agreed to that, what guarantee can you give me that the Battler, or whatever you call him, 'll agree to a match afterwards?"

"I couldn't guarantee it, of course," said Geoghan; "but I'd bet on it. Tell you what I'll do: You've got fifteen hundred, haven't you? Well, supposing you give me five hundred of it for a purse for a ten-round fight between your man Blain and Terry Tindle—Tindle to win as agreed. Then I'll bet you fifteen hundred against your thousand that Blain can't beat the Battler afterward, money back if there's no fight."

"You mean," said O'Hanlon, "that Billy's got to let this man Tindle beat him?"

"That's the idea."

"But why on earth should I pay you five hundred?"

"You don't expect me to do all the work and planning for nothing, do you? See here: I stage the fight; I provide the man to beat Blain; I arrange for the Battler's being there to see it; and I sign up the Battler for a match afterward. All you've got to do is to see that your man fights to orders, and pay me five hundred dollars.

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That's as fair as it could be, isn't it?"

"—— if I see it!" said O'Hanlon. "Billy's a decent little cuss; I don't see letting him get beaten, let alone paying you five hundred dollars for it!"

"All right!" said Geoghan; "suit yourself! I told you you'd got to be wise to the game before you could make any coin out of it; you'll discover I'm right before you're through. Try somewhere else, and see whether you can arrange a match with the Battler. I'll bet you ten dollars you can't."

O'Hanlon argued for another hour and drank nearly another pint of whisky before he finally gave in and committed Billy Blain to a fake engagement with Terry Tindle. It was agreed between them that Billy was to stall all the way through the fight and let Tindle win the decision on points. O'Hanlon paid Geoghan five hundred dollars, and articles for the fight were drawn up and signed.

Then O'Hanlon posted a thousand dollars with an official stakeholder as a side-bet on his man against Battling Bill Benson, and Geoghan covered it with fifteen hundred, it being mutually agreed that the stakeholder was to return the money if the Battler refused to fight.

It was a fool bet in every sense of the word, but O'Hanlon was too drunk by that time to be responsible. An hour or two later he was thrown into a cab and sent back to the *Diogenes* in a state of drunken slumber.

III

IT WAS a sore and sorry Terence O'Hanlon who sent for Billy Blain the morning following and unfolded to him the details of the scheme; and it was an even sorrier Billy Blain who sat on the cabin locker and listened to them.

"It's good-by me and the fight-game," said Billy, "if they catch me stalling!"

O'Hanlon nodded.

"They mustn't catch you!" he answered.

"It looks like this to me," said Billy: "He's got your five hundred, hasn't he? If I lose to this man Tindle, he's got it for keeps, too, and we've got to take our chance after that of getting a match with Battling Bill; if that match comes off, you stand to lose another thousand, and that's about all we've got between us.

"Take it the other way: Supposing I beat Tindle, you get back the five hundred—it's winner take all, I suppose—and we've got just as good a chance as ever of signing up with the Battler."

"Don't you believe it, boy! Geoghan wouldn't pay me back the five hundred, he'd find some way out o' that. And he won't let you beat Tindle; he'll fix that with the referee. And supposing you did beat Tindle, and the Battler refused to fight, Geoghan 'ud hold up that money I posted with the stakeholder; he'd hold it up for a year maybe, pretendin' all the while that he was negotiating for a match. You take it from me, if you let Tindle get the decision, Geoghan'll bring the Battler up to the scratch all right; he don't believe you've got a chance to beat him, and he reckons on winning my thousand if the fight comes off."

"I don't like it!" said Billy.

"No more do I, my son. It's a fool business from start to finish, and it's all my fault for getting drunk last night. You can turn me down if you like, and I'm out five hundred at the least, but I'll not blame ye."

"No," said Billy; "I'll not turn you down. I'll fight, an' I'll stall; but s'help me Gawd if I like it!"

"I've said more than once that you were a decent little runt," said O'Hanlon, "and I was right each time! Shake!"

Billy put his right hand in O'Hanlon's, and all but yelled as the giant gripped it, for the chief had no notion of how strong he was.

"For the love o' Mike!" said Billy, "are you tryin' to fix me so's I can't beat Tindle anyhow? You've got a flipper like one o' them there vises!"

O'Hanlon laughed.

"'Twasn't meant to hurt ye, boy. Now, not a word of all this to the Skipper, mind! Just tell him you're booked to fight Terry Tindle ten rounds next Wednesday night, if he asks ye."

"I sha'n't talk," said Billy. "Stallin' 's bad enough without tellin' all your friends about it! But supposin' the Skipper wants to bet on me?" he added as an afterthought.

"He never bets. He's got a wife and family for one thing, and it's against his principles for another. He never betted in his life."

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"Sure?"

"Dead sure. He lectures me about it as often as not."

"All right," said Billy; "mum's the word then."

The Skipper did ask Billy what arrangements had been made, and Billy told him, without enthusiasm, that he expected to fight Terry Tindle on the following Wednesday evening for a five-hundred-dollar purse.

"But isn't that against the law?" the Skipper asked him.

"There'll be no decision, of course, unless there's a knock-out," said Billy; "but they divide up the purse before the fight."

"How much do you get out of it?" asked the Skipper.

"Better ask the chief that!" said Billy.

"Well, you look fit enough to beat anything!" said the Skipper. "I'll be there to see you!"

"——!" said Billy; "I'd hate him to see me licked!"

IV

THERE was no appearance of enthusiasm over in Billy's corner on the evening of the fight. O'Hanlon was his second, as he had been in the first fight, and the steward held the bottle and bucket for him; the steward drew his feeling of uneasiness from O'Hanlon who was ashamed of himself and looked despondent; Billy was frankly bad tempered at the prospect of what lay in front of him.

The only cheerful member of Billy's party was the Skipper, who was seated in the front row; he had come to the gymnasium alone, and knew nothing whatever of any ground for uneasiness. As Billy crawled through the ropes the Skipper nodded to him cheerily, but Billy affected not to see him; he sat down in his corner with his legs stretched out in front of him, and stared straight at his opponent's corner.

When Tindle crawled through the ropes on his side there was a buzz of comment from the fans; they remembered his recent beating at the hands of Battling Bill and judged that this was his effort to come back again. There were one or two offers to bet, and suddenly somebody over in a corner of the hall shouted out,

"Three to one on Tindle!"

"I thought there was to be no decision?" said the Skipper, speaking to the man who was sitting next to him, a rather over-dressed individual with a broken nose.

"There won't be unless it's a knock-out; they bet on the decision of the morning papers."

"Are they given on the level?"

"Sure."

"I'd like to have a bet at those odds."

The over-dressed man raised his eyebrows, and stared at the Skipper hard.

"Feel like posting the money?" he asked.

"I'll put my money up against yours, if you'll lay me three to one!" said the Skipper.

"We might arrange that. Wait here a minute, will you?"

The over-dressed man rose and walked over to the corner of the ring opposite to Billy, and whispered for a moment to Geoghan, who was leaning there against the platform. Geoghan nodded, and the man came back to the Skipper again.

"All right," he said; "I'll bet you any sum in reason at three to one. If you'll come over here with me we can arrange for some one to hold the money—it's usual when folks who want to bet don't know each other."

The Skipper walked away with him, and came back after about three minutes looking more satisfied than ever.

Tindle, over in his corner, sat with a supercilious sneer on his face and tried to stare Billy out of countenance; Billy stared back at him and scowled. Tindle had been told by Geoghan that his opponent was pledged to stall all through the fight, but not a word about why he was to stall; so Tindle had jumped to the conclusion that Billy was taking a licking for the sake of ten or fifteen badly needed dollars, and, having frequently done that kind of thing in his early days himself, he felt a quite magnificent contempt for any one else who would do the same thing.

He knew the state of mind that alone could bring a man to that pass; it came always after a protracted period of being down and out, and Tindle despised any one who was down and out. So he sat and sneered at Billy, and Billy boiled with indignation.

WHILE the official announcer was bawling out his set speech introducing the combatants, Billy turned and whispered to O'Hanlon.

"Now, y'understand," he muttered, "this

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here Terry Tindle 's goin' to use all the foul tricks he knows, just 'cause he's sure we can't claim 'em. We've got to lose, an' he knows it. Like as not the referee wouldn't give a foul against him if we claimed it. You've got to sit quiet and let him foul all he likes! It's dirty rotten business, but—"

"'Twon't be so bad as all that, boy!" said O'Hanlon. "He's got his own reputation to think of!"

Billy laughed.

"Aw, shut up!" he answered. "I'm not a chicken at this game! I know a few things about it!"

The referee went through the formality of calling both combatants to the center and giving them instructions. They looked evenly enough matched as they stood facing each other, but Billy seemed to be much the better trained of the two; the muscles stood out in ridges underneath his vest, and his skin shone with the satin glow of health.

The other man was paler and rather less bulky; but he was two inches taller than Billy, and considerably longer in the reach. There was an unhealthy look about him, though, that told of drink and low-living, and it made the repeated calls of "Three to one on Tindle" seem all the more extraordinary.

When the referee had finished talking the two shook hands, and Tindle muttered some sneering remark or other that made Billy flush all over. At the word, "Time!" Billy answered it with a sudden, stinging smack to the neck that sent Tindle back on to his heels.

"Ah-h-h!" roared the fans; but Billy did not follow up the blow, and their burst of enthusiasm died away again as quickly as it had started.

"Fight all you like," growled Billy, "but you take my tip and hold your tongue!"

Tindle came back at him with a vicious swing; Billy guarded it neatly, and they clinched. There was evidently no love lost between them, for as they swayed to and fro they snarled like a couple of angry dogs, and again Tindle said something that roused Billy to the boiling-point. The effect was instantaneous, and the fans burst out again in a tumult of excitement as Billy broke loose and sent several short chopping blows home into Tindle's ribs.

Before Tindle had time to clinch again or cover up, Billy's left shot out like the stroke of a piston-rod and brought blood streaming from his nose and mouth. Then Tindle clinched again, and the rest of the round was more like wrestling than boxing. It was clearly Billy's round.

"Sonny, you're going to beat him if you're not careful!" said O'Hanlon, as Billy returned to his corner. "See that fellow with a broken nose sittin' over there next the Skipper? That's Battling Bill Benson! You've got to let him think you're an easy mark."

"There's plenty of time for that!" said Billy, sitting bolt upright on his stool and speaking over his shoulder; "I'll go tired or something in the seventh or eighth. I've got to teach this guy some manners first, though!"

"Never you mind his manners!" said O'Hanlon. "You keep your mind on the engagement with Battling Bill!"

"Time!"

The two men came to the center again, and Tindle led off; his nose had stopped bleeding, and he looked little the worse for his punishment in the first round, but he was evidently a little afraid of Billy by this time, for he covered the moment Billy moved, and his blows seemed to have no steam in them.

BILLY boxed for half a minute, putting in some quite amazing footwork and drawing Tindle all the way round the ring after him, drawing him out, coaxing him into indiscretions, leading him on into making wild and ill-judged swings, guarding and covering and dancing away in front of him, but apparently not caring to hit back.

Tindle tried to force him into a corner, but Billy slipped away from him, and as he did so, Tindle lunged at him with all his might, swinging for the head and leaving his whole left side exposed when he missed. Billy took full advantage of that opportunity; it would not have been in human nature to let it pass, and Billy had the training and instinct of the pugilist to help out human nature.

The thud of Billy's left against Tindle's upper ribs resounded through the hall, and it was followed by a left-right-left to the ribs again, with all of Billy's strength and weight behind them. Tindle reeled backward and sideways against the ropes, mill-

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ing wildly, and completely off his balance, and Billy followed up with a left to the nose again that brought the blood once more streaming from his opponent's nose.

Tindle clinched and held on, and Billy chose to let him stay there. The two men swayed and struggled all about the ring for the remainder of the round, breaking for a second when the referee compelled them, and clinching again at once. The fans hooted when time was called.

"What did you do that for?" asked O'Hanlon. "Aren't you going to let him win?"

"Gawd!" said Billy. "The blighter won't win! I'm doin' my best, but I can't make him beat me!"

"Don't hit him so hard!" counseled the engineer.

"Right you are!" said Billy.

It seemed to be an altogether different Billy Blain when time was called for the next round. He did not exactly limp into the middle of the ring, but he managed to give the impression of being lame, and instead of shifting restlessly from foot to foot he stood stock still and waited. Tindle realized what had happened: Billy had plainly been reminded that he had got to lose, and begin losing at once.

Tindle had received all the punishment he cared about at Billy's hands, and most of it was in his opinion quite unnecessary, so he proceeded to take prompt advantage of Billy's position and do his best to even matters. It was he who made use of footwork this time, and when he found after the first exchange of blows that there was no real snap behind Billy's punches—that Billy was "pulling" them in fact—he recovered his nerve completely.

Confidence was what he had lacked after the punishment that Billy had handed him in the first round, and now that he felt more sure of himself, he began to think again. Billy stood still in the center of the ring, boxing cleverly enough, but barely shifting his feet at all; Tindle walked round and round him, getting home a blow to the face now and then, but sparring chiefly with the idea of finding Billy's point of least resistance. It had begun to dawn on him that he might catch Billy unawares by careful maneuvering, and end the fight suddenly with a knock-out.

So he sent over nothing in the way of serious punches, contenting himself with light blows that stung, but did no damage.

Billy felt his opponent's apparent weakness and grew careless; the blows that did reach his face or body did not hurt him, and most of them failed to get beyond his guard, and in addition to that the first two rounds had given him a very poor opinion of his opponent; he saw no necessity to stretch himself, and in a fight of any kind that is a singularly dangerous attitude to hold.

Tindle straightened suddenly and feinted with his right; Billy guarded it; then Tindle slugged with the speed of lightning—straight for the point of Billy's jaw! The next thing Billy knew he was lying on the broad of his back with the referee bending over him and counting. He rose to his feet, staggering, at the call of nine, and managed to last out the round by hanging on and clinching; but he tottered to his corner, and O'Hanlon and the steward had all their work cut out to bring him to himself again in the minute interval.

HE DID recover, though, for the recuperative power of a man who has led a clean life and has been trained on good food and hard work is nothing short of astonishing. There were ten seconds yet to go when he looked around him, and the ring and the spectators and O'Hanlon and the man in the corner opposite were tangible realities again. He caught sight of the Skipper's face then—pale and disappointed, and cold rage took the place of lethargy. No one, to see him step into the middle of the ring when time was called, would have thought he had been knocked all but senseless in the preceding round.

O'Hanlon whispered something to him as he left his seat, but he either did not hear it, or else ignored it. His eyes were on his opponent; he saw nothing but the enemy who had taken advantage of his efforts to stall and had tried to knock him out; he forgot O'Hanlon's five hundred dollars and the chance of a match with Battling Bill, and remembered nothing but his skill and courage.

From that moment he was Billy Blain, ex-lightweight and would-be champion of the welters, out to win. And Tindle discovered it before the ring of the time-keeper's gong had died away to silence. Billy rushed him from the start, and slammed him round and round the ring backward, rocking him on to his heels, and forcing

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him to try to clinch; but there was no clinching, for Billy side-stepped him and volleyed punches on his ears and behind his jaw.

Twice he forced Tindle to his knees and stood back waiting for him to recover, and the moment he was on his feet again Billy rushed in and banged home both gloves, left-right-left, to the head and ribs and stomach. The fans stood up in their seats and shouted; O'Hanlon, sporting instincts to the front now and all memories of his pocketbook forgotten, roared and stamped his feet and shouted his delight.

"Oh, sick, him, Billy! Sick him, boy—that's it! Now again! Oh! Good boy!"

The steward had his work cut out to keep him from crawling through the ropes in his excitement. The Skipper sat quietly on his front seat and grinned his pleasure, and the broken-nosed man next to him nodded in critical approval; Geoghan seemed the only one dissatisfied—he scowled across toward O'Hanlon and muttered beneath his breath; the rest of the house yelled and hammered on the benches, and the air was a sea of waving programs.

Round and round the ring went Billy; he had his opponent on the run now, and there was little need for science. Tindle tried to foul him, hoping vainly that O'Hanlon would be foolish enough to claim it; he used the heel of his glove, and his elbows, and tried to stamp on Billy's feet, but Billy stuck to plain straight punches to the jaw and body, delivered with every ounce of steam he had behind them. Tindle slowed down, and swayed, and tottered.

"Soak him, Billy!" yelled O'Hanlon.

And precisely as O'Hanlon said it, Billy soaked him, landing clean and neat on the peak of Tindle's jaw. It was a wild and exciting finish to a slow, uninteresting fight, and the fans were satisfied. Almost before the referee had counted Tindle out they began to leave their seats and make their way noisily to the exits, and the hall was all but empty when Billy, walking between O'Hanlon and the steward, made his way to the dressing-room again.

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"YOU know, I couldn't help it!" said Billy to O'Hanlon; "I just had to lick that guy! If you want a man to stall, you've got to put up a man he can stall to!"

"I'm glad you licked him, sonny! I'd ha' been ashamed for ever and a day if you hadn't! I only wish you'd licked him sooner!"

"How about that thousand you posted for a match with Battling Bill? Can't you get that back?"

"Not till the Battler's refused to fight," said O'Hanlon. "It was in the nature of a side bet, to be returned if there was no fight, but there was no date for the fight named. As long as Geoghan cares to leave his fifteen hundred there we'll have to leave ours to cover it. He'll maybe hang on for a year in the hope of tricking us."

"The skunk!" said Billy; and at that moment in came Geoghan.

"You've a fat chance for a match with the Battler now!" he remarked, appearing strangely enough far from dissatisfied. "when I manage a man, he fights to orders; he don't knock people out unless I tell him to!"

"I told you the little runt can fight!" said O'Hanlon. "He just can't help winning. How about that match with Battling Bill now? Hadn't you better see him about it?"

"What's the use?"

"Well, either you've got to see him or else call that bet off!"

"Have I?" said Geoghan. "I'm not so sure about that; there was no time mentioned. You come and see me to-morrow and we'll talk it over; perhaps we can come to some arrangement satisfactory to both sides."

"I knew he'd have some infernal scheme or other up his sleeve!" declared O'Hanlon. "He's a dead wrong 'un all the way through!"

Geoghan had hardly left before the Skipper entered, accompanied by the man with the broken nose.

"Gad!" said O'Hanlon, "the Battler, or I'm a Dutchman!"

"Billy!" said the Skipper, ignoring O'Hanlon altogether, "this is Battling Bill Benson; he'd like to talk to you."

The two fighting men stood and eyed each other in silence for half a minute; then Benson grinned.

"Say, kid!" he exclaimed, "that's surely some punch you've got!"

"Like to sample it?" asked Billy.

"I don't care if I do! This gent here says he's a friend o' yours. I just lost fifteen hundred to him, layin' against you at three to one. I'd like to get it back again.

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He says he'll stake you for that amount to fight me ten rounds. Suit you?"

"Suit me all right!" said Billy, looking from O'Hanlon to the Skipper, and from the Skipper back again to O'Hanlon.

"Thought you didn't bet?" said O'Hanlon.

"It's the first time I ever did," said the Skipper. "Are you in on this?"

"No money!" said O'Hanlon. "Mine's up already."

"Let's go shares, then, and manage him together. That suit you, Billy?"

"Sure!" said Billy. "That 'ld suit me A 1."

"When'll we sign articles?" asked the Battler.

"Now, if you like!" said all three men together. "Who's your manager?" asked O'Hanlon, almost in the same breath, "Geoghan?"

"That swine? Him manage me? Not on your tintype! I'm my own manager. Why Geoghan?"

"I've got a thousand-dollar bet with him, money posted, that Billy here can beat you in ten rounds!" said O'Hanlon.

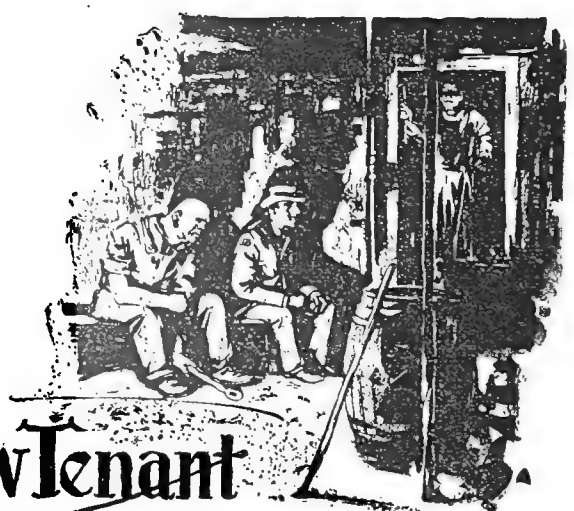
"Well, I'm ——!" exclaimed the Battler. "You've got a nerve! What's he doing? Trying to welch?"

"Rather looks like it."

"Who's stakeholder?"

"Man name o' Bronson."

"I know Bronson. He's on the level as a rule. I'll tip him off there'll be a fight, and tell him to hold the stakes until it's over. You'll lose your money, 'cause Blain here can't beat me, not in a lifetime, but you may just as well have a show for it. Let's go somewhere and talk terms, if you're ready. I'll see Bronson afterward."



The New Tenant

by Vincent Oswald*

THE Sodality Building was one of those office structures of a type common in every great and growing city: yesterday, quite modern; to-day, not "up-to-date;" to-morrow, hopelessly old-fashioned—thus rapidly is it overshadowed by the dimensions, dignity, elegance and superconvenience of the latest steel sky-scrapers.

*See page 411.

The Sodality was a link between the old and the new; its decreased importance being reflected in decreased care of maintenance, which in turn had filled it with a mixed assortment of inferior tenants, and imparted quite a Bohemian atmosphere. But one of the most striking peculiarities of the establishment was that, in spite of its constantly shifting tenantry, it always

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remained fully occupied. Though nobody seemed to stay very long, new tenants moved in as fast as old ones moved out.

The newcomers were attracted by the highly desirable centrality of location, and a disproportionate reasonableness of rent; while those who left for other reasons than inability to pay their rent usually did so because of the poor janitor service and the careless manner in which the affairs of the building were administered. This indifference and lack of attention were due to the fact that the owner lived in almost daily expectation of selling the property at a handsome profit because of its attractive and valuable site.

One of these substitutions of occupants was now in process. A fourth-floor room, recently vacated, had been taken by a young man who was just moving in, and who, in making his arrangements with Mr. Jamison, the agent, had stated his business as that of expert stenographer.

He was a slim, tallish, active young fellow, with fair hair that grew in abundance above a broad forehead, the unusual development of which plainly indicated the presence of brains that had been used. He had amber-gray eyes that gazed at you frankly out of a finely chiseled, boyish face of a type likely to make instant impression upon susceptible young women—to say nothing of a fine mouth, with lips that parted frequently in a merry smile over even, handsome teeth.

Indeed, he seemed to possess the qualities that charmed even his own sex; for Mr. Jamison, grown habitually suspicious in a long experience with doubtful tenants, indulged in little inquisitorial parley, and cordially handed over the key of the vacant office, as well as a key to the front door of the building itself—the young man explaining that the nature of his business was irregular and sometimes necessitated his working all night on transcriptions.

"All right," acquiesced Mr. Jamison. "Here are the keys; do as you please. This is an informal sort of place," he added, a slow, odd smile creeping over his thoughtful features; "come and go as you wish; work as you choose, at what you please. No one will care, so long as you pay your rent regularly, conduct yourself with reasonable decency, and don't make yourself or your business a nuisance to your fellow tenants."

"There," commented the youth to himself, "is a good man, sour on a bad job; but afraid to give it up because he needs the money."

The fellow tenants soon discovered that the newcomer was anything but a nuisance; and speedily fell, like the agent, under the spell of his bright personality and irresistible good comradeship.

After he had moved his scant stock of plain, oak furniture into the office, he had the glass panel of the door lettered:

FRANK FISHER
EXPERT STENOGRAPHER

If his proficiency in stenography equaled his skill in typewriting, he was expert, too; for he could make his machine hum in such a tense, high key, and with so few pauses, that the blue-eyed youth who kept the books in the adjoining real-estate office, and the black-eyed typewriter girl, stopping their work, sat listening to the extraordinary performance of the new neighbor.

"Ain't he a crackerjack!" exclaimed the bookkeeper, with an appreciative flash of his blue eyes. "Just hark how he burns that tick-tack! But, say, anybody can see in one look that he's smart as Old Nick, all right! Bet'ch' a quarter he does everything else just the way he's rattling those finger-dots now."

"But, my! ain't he a handsome boy!" admiringly murmured the young lady, as she skilfully shifted her chewing-gum from the left jaw to the right.

Apparently Fisher was also steady and businesslike; for when, a few days afterward, the obliging young bookkeeper, bearing in mind the damsel's significant remark, whispered, with a suggestive smile, as the two chanced to meet in the corridor on the way to the elevator, "Our girl says you're a handsome boy," the expert merely quoted sagely, "Handsome is as handsome does," and immediately proceeded to the elevator-shaft, where he calmly pushed the signal-button, while the blue eyes regarded him wonderingly.

THERE were only two persons in the building who seemed indisposed to take to the winsome tenant.

One of these was Pete, the janitor, a medium-sized, raw-boned, grizzled man of about fifty, with hard, close-shaven features and piercing steel-colored eyes of marvelous shrewdness. He had a sort of general

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charge of the building; and, in addition, was known as the night-watchman—because he slept on the premises.

The other was Jabowski, a Polish Jew, who swept and cleaned, busying himself throughout the day with the multitudinous chores about the place. He, also, slept in the building, because his daily work began before daybreak, even in midsummer.

Jabowski was a large, powerful man of middle age. He was indescribably ignorant, able to speak but a few words of English, and these in a stumbling, incoherent fashion.

Strong and an indefatigable worker, Jabowski was invaluable in the endless heavy labor about the premises; but the hopeless unintelligence of his mind and the impossibility of his speech made him utterly dependent upon the naturally dominant Pete, whose aid the helpless foreigner sought in all his difficulties. It was perfectly clear to every tenant in the building that Jabowski was to Pete as the chisel is to the mallet.

Both these men evinced from the first a disinclination to respond to the pleasant ways and winning manners of the new tenant. But it was beyond human nature to hold out against him; and so before long, they fell; Jabowski first—to the lure of a glittering pipe and a bag of fragrant tobacco; Pete second—to the witchery of Havana cigars.

As time went on, Pete seemed to be drawn more and more into the vortex of the fascination; for the night work of the stenographer and the nocturnal duties of the janitor threw the two frequently into contact.

During the day Fisher was out a great deal, and his office was closed. Occasionally he was absent for several days at a time, presumably working in other offices. But he was likely to turn up at any moment, usually late in the evening, when, if the building was closed, he would let himself in with his front-door key and climb the four stories to his office.

Often, the janitor, hearing some one enter, would slip down from his bunk in the big loft that occupied the entire fifth floor, "just to make sure it's all right," he would explain. Fisher, with a note-book in his hand or protruding from his pocket, would greet him with the exclamation:

"It's O K, Pete. No rest for the wicked! I may be on the job all night."

Quite rapidly their intimacy reached a stage where Pete began to borrow money when he "ran short;" first, fifty cents, then a dollar, two dollars, three dollars—all of which he returned with punctilious promptitude. Next, the sum reached five dollars; and it was on this occasion that Fisher, instead of producing the amount as usual from the "change" in his trousers' pocket, pulled from an inner breast pocket of his coat a handsome Russia leather wallet and the expectant eyes of the eager Pete saw that the various compartments were bulging with goodly stores of beautiful new bills, most of which were of the yellow brand.

And sometimes Fisher, after remaining in his office all day would go out to supper, then return and resume work, with his door standing invitingly open. Thus Pete would find him, as the janitor, coming in after an evening's airing—and other things—journeyed toward the loft for the night.

IN THIS fashion Pete was the guest on a certain evening in May, some two months after Fisher had taken up quarters in the Sodality Building.

"Do you know this is a queer old building," commented Fisher, tentatively, as, ignoring his work, he puffed thoughtfully at his cigar. "I've come in here to my shack late of a Sunday evening, when the whole city was quiet, the building deserted, not a light in it, and I tell you, Pete, it gives a fellow a sort of creepy feeling to climb those stairs as they wind around the elevator-shaft, three little flights to each floor. When you take the last flight in each series you somehow wonder whether anybody's lurking behind the wall at the top of the flight to hit you in the head in the dark as you come within reach. You wouldn't have any show, Pete; he'd have it all his way."

In the illumination of the electric light Pete's hard face took on a very perceptible greenish-yellow tinge.

"No, you wouldn't have a particle o' show," he agreed, as he stood at the end of the desk, appreciatively puffing the Havana. "Yes, I've often thought of it."

Presently the glow of good-fellowship, which had not been dependent upon the Havana alone, crept again into his hard-featured face, supplanting the momentary, sickly hue.

"Yes," he continued, his cold, steely eyes

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piercingly but furtively contemplating the apparently unconscious face of the other, "many a time I've thought of it as I came in late and began to climb up to my roost. 'Deed it is a queer building, Mr. Fisher, an almighty queer building!"

He leaned down over the end of the desk, bringing his face close to that of the young man, and his voice fell to a low, confidential tone, as he seemed to thaw completely under the combined influence of the cigar's aroma, the host's geniality, the suggestive silence of the big building, the mystic softness of the late Summer night, and the thrill of the sinister subject under discussion, not to mention anything else.

"Mr. Fisher," he said, with impressiveness, "did I ever tell you what happened to me in this building?"

The youthful face turned eagerly up to his, and the amber-gray eyes sparkled expectantly.

"No, Pete, you never did. Was it interesting?"

"Awful interestin'," nodded Pete. "I kind o' thought," and he obtrusively studied the other's face with the air of a connoisseur, "that you're the sort to be specially fond of anything strange. People with eyes like yours generally is."

"Do you mean uncanny?"

"Yep you might say, uncanny."

"Well, you're right, Pete, I just dote on the uncanny. Go on, pile ahead with your story; I don't care if I have to work all night to make up the time."

"It was last Winter two year ago, maybe three; anyway, the W inter of that big bliz. Well, it started in to snow on a Sunday night. I was down home that evenin', and I says to myself, 'Pete, my boy,' says I, 'this here storm looks kind o' serious. Maybe it might be a good thing for you to go up to the Sodality Building to-night, 'cause you got to be at work on some of them offices at six o'clock in the morning, and if the cars shouldn't be able to run you'd be stuck, sure.'

"So I puts on my things and walks up here, and it wasn't no easy walk at that. I lets myself in the front door, just the same as I would on a week-day, and goes down the basement. You see, we've got a cot in the engine-room, and in Winter-time we sleep down there instead of up in the loft, 'cause the steam-pipes keeps it good and warm.

"Well, I lays myself out on the cot, leavin' one small, smoky electric lamp turned on, and I was just about dozin' off when a little fox-terrier we were keeping a few days for Mr. Jamison begins to go *Gr-r-r-r!*

"I looks up, of course, and there, right in the doorway of the engine-room, was an old colored man standin', with his arm reachin' up over the steam-pipes.

"I hadn't heard a sound o' the old gentleman comin' in, and never suspicioned there was anybody in the building before me, so I set straight up on the cot and says, real sharp, 'Well, sir, what do you want?'

"He looked at me without sayin' a single word, then turned right round on his heels and walked out the way he must have come in.

"At that I jumps up and chases after him, but I couldn't catch him before he reached the first floor. I thought he must have slipped out the front door, but,when I tried it, it was locked just the way I left it. Then, knowin' he couldn't get out, I hustles straight up-stairs to the very top o' the building and comes down through it to the basement again, trying the doors of all the offices, but they were all locked and there wasn't no sign anywhere of the colored man."

"Weren't you frightened?" inquired Fisher, in a tone of breathless interest.

"Not a bit," replied Pete emphatically. "No, I wasn't scared a particle. Of course, I thought it was mighty queer, but I can't say as I was even nervous. Well, I goes back to the cot and lays down the second time but, lo and behold you, just as I was floatin' off, the dog he goes *Gr-r-r-r!* again, and when I looks up, there's the same old colored gent right in the same place, with his arm histed the same way.

"All of a sudden it comes to me, and I knows! And I says to myself, 'If it ain't old Bobby Benjamin!' Ever hear tell o' Bobby Benjamin, Mr. Fisher?"

"Seems to me I've read the name somewhere," answered the youth, in a manner that might have seemed evasive to one more critically observant than the absorbed Pete.

"Well, old Bobby Benjamin was murdered right in that spot four years ago."

"Murdered!" gasped Fisher.

"That's what he was," assured the janitor in a hard, subdued voice, like the soft rasp of a file. "He used to have pretty much the same job I've got, and he slept down in the engine-room in the Winter. He

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had some kind of a mix-up with his family about money. Bobby was mighty saving, they say, but he had no time for banks, and used to hide his money in the engine-room, somewhere up among the steam-pipes.

"It seems that his nephew, a young colored fellow that was supposed to be quite respectable, knowed this and tried to get Bobby to lend him the money to go into business, offerin' the old man half the profits, but Bobby refused, and they had a quarrel over it. Then, what does the nephew do but follow his uncle all the way to the building that night and, sneakin' in after him, hides behind the elevator. The young fellow lived in his uncle's house, and probably had a key made from the old man's.

"Well, when Bobby's back was turned the nephew soaked him in the head with a potato-sack loaded with brick-bats. The bloody bag was found there the next mornin' with Bobby beside it, his skull crushed from behind. They took him to the hospital where he died in a short time."

"Did they get the rascally nephew?" inquired Fisher, his eye fixed in covert wonder upon the other's impassive face.

"Yep, he's in jail now, servin' twenty years for manslaughter. I guess they'd 'a' hung him all right only he kept playin' the innocent game, and they didn't have the right kind of witnesses, and the jurors weren't certain about some points, and all that. Well, then I got the job here, and ever since the murder, Jabowski—who was here a year before me and worked that long beside old Bobby Benjamin—won't stay alone in the building."

"I don't wonder!" murmured Fisher, meditatively.

PETE remained silent, as though expecting further comment, but as none was forthcoming he continued like a man who, desirous of leading his story to a certain, effective point, was determined to accomplish his object.

"The next day when I got a chance I told the engineer of the building what I had seen, and he said, 'I suppose, now, you think you're something, don't you, Pete? Why, say, I seen that fellow many a time!'"

"This begins to get almighty interesting!" exclaimed Fisher, with more enthusiasm than he had yet displayed.

At that, Pete plunged on eagerly.

"Then I seen another fellow I know, and I told him, too, but he laughed at me, so I said, 'Well, if you want it proved to you, all you've got to do is to come down there with me any Sunday night at twelve o'clock.'"

"What did he say to that, Pete?"

"'Like —— I will!'"

Fisher's face relaxed, and the janitor grinned.

"That same day I seen Mr. Jamison, and I says to him, 'Mr. Jamison, what did old Bobby Benjamin look like?'

"Mr. Jamison he gave me a kind of side look, and says, 'Why do you ask me that, Peter?'

"'Cause,' says I, 'we had a little argument about it the other day and I want to settle the point.'

"'I see,' says Mr. Jamison. 'Well, Peter, he was rather tall, and generally wore black pants and a longish black coat.'

"'And did he wear a bow-tie and a kind of high hat?'

"'Yes,' says Mr. Jamison, 'he was a pretty good-looking old colored gentleman.'

"'He certainly looked pretty good to me,' says I.

"When he asked me what I meant by that, I told him all about it; and he says, very serious, 'Peter, if it was anybody else but you told me this, I don't think I could believe it.'

"'If you don't believe it,' says I, 'come down to the engine-room with me any Sunday night about twelve o'clock.'

"'Not for money!' says Mr. Jamison.

Fisher spoke out abruptly, like a man piqued to sudden decision by something in the other's persistent statements.

"See here, Pete! I'll go down there with you."

"Any Sunday at twelve o'clock. But you'll have to keep awful quiet when you get there, and be sure not to mention a word of it beforehand to a livin' soul."

"Next Sunday, at twelve o'clock!" said Fisher positively.

Pete was unmistakably pleased; in fact, his shrewd face was suffused with beaming satisfaction, and he vouchsafed an additional scrap of information in a slow, confidential tone.

"You see, Mr. Fisher, I thought it might be this way: maybe the old colored man can't rest easy on account of that money. The murderer failed to get it, and they say

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it's still hid away in the steam-pipes, so probably it's heavy on old Bobby's mind."

"Have you searched?"

"Everywhere. And if Jabowski can't find money, nobody can; he fair smells it."

"Maybe if we'd ask decently, the old fellow's ghost would tell us where the cash is, and what he wants done with it, Pete; then we could attend to the matter and let him rest in peace."

"M-a-y-be," agreed the janitor, hesitatingly.

THE following Sunday night found them both ensconced in the engine-room, patiently sitting within a few feet of each other on the edge of the cot, which stood along the wall directly opposite the entrance-door.

In the Sabbath stillness of the big, deserted building, the two figures sat silent and motionless, until Fisher, wearily stretching his arms, turned toward Pete—in the dim glow of the single, dirty, sickly, little incandescent lamp—and inquired sleepily,

"What the deuce time is it, Pete?"

"Hush!" warned Pete. Then, added suddenly, "Look!"

As Fisher turned at the command, he saw, standing upon the threshold and framed faintly in the doorway, a tall, black figure in the very act of elevating a hand. While the youth's eyes fastened themselves upon the spectral form, Pete bent low over the edge of the cot, his hand reaching toward some object on the floor.

Then, suddenly, in the most unexpected fashion and with the instant swiftness of sheer impulse, Fisher, in one gigantic bound, shot over the space intervening between the cot and the doorway. Like a panther he landed upon the ghostly figure and bore it supinely to the ground, just outside the door, his legs parted across the body, his knees planted upon the two extended arms, pinning them helplessly, while his fingers gripped the black throat with such force that only a spluttering gurgle came from the quivering lips.

With a rippling volley of frenzied imprecations, the janitor, snatching up a heavy steel engine-lever that had been lying under the cot, with an end projecting casually between his feet, sprang toward the doorway almost as swiftly as had Fisher. But just as Pete arrived at the threshold, with his fearful weapon poised above the head of the victorious Fisher, there seemed to grow magically out of the gloom beyond, an iron fist which—driven by a powerful arm that reached across the prostrate figures—crashed into the enraged face with such force that the furious onset came to a sudden stop.

The heavy steel bar dropped upon the concrete floor with a chime-like ring, and the form of the janitor, after blindly staggering back a pace or two, collapsed within a few feet of his bludgeon as it lay across the door-sill!

The next instant something clicked upon the wrists of both the ghost and the janitor, and Pete, sitting dazedly up, just as an electric switch was thrown, flooding the place with light, beheld Fisher, the Expert Stenographer, lolling calmly on the cot as he watched the movements of half a dozen men who must have been cunningly hidden in the subterranean crannies of the old place!

The strangers responded rapidly to the authoritative commands of a tall, powerfully built man, who was evidently in charge of the party, and who, while issuing terse directions, drew forth a handkerchief and wiped the blood from the back of his right hand where the skin was broken in several places near the knuckles.

One of the men, snatching up a small piece of fresh cotton-waste, and dipping it in the water contained in a red bucket marked FIRE, passed the sop down the black visage of the captured ghost, thus exposing in its natural color just one-half of the scared face of Jabowski.

"What the—— does all this mean?" roared Pete wildly, as he glared about him in stupefication.

The tall man replied quietly,

"It means, Jim Klinger, alias Peter Rankin, that you are arrested for the murder, four years ago, of poor old Bobby Benjamin, whose innocent nephew has been in prison ever since, after narrowly escaping the gallows, thanks to the cunning advantage you took of the known friction between the two about some money."

"I didn't do it, by—— I didn't! It was that devil there!" screamed the janitor, pointing a shaking, accusing finger at the trembling Jabowski.

"It is quite possible his was the hand that struck the actual blow," retorted the officer, "that will all come out at the trial; but it is

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absolutely certain that yours was the mind that conceived the foul plot. You're a cold-blooded fiend, Peter. You never saw poor old Benjamin, and had nothing whatever against him, yet when you heard through your obedient tool, Jabowski, of Bobby's savings, you plotted with the avaricious and half imbecile Polander to do the deed, and when you couldn't find the old man's money you took his job, hoping to discover the cash later, or, at any rate, to use the job as you've just tried to do, as a means to other criminal operations."

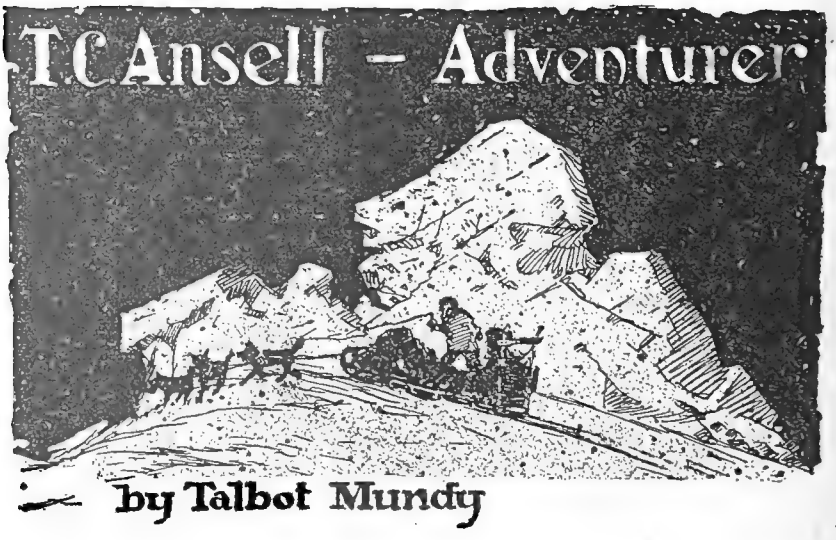
"Yes, Peter," drawled the voice of Fisher from the cot, "I know what a wonder of ingenuity you are. That ghost-story of yours, Pete, was simply great! But, Pete, just for your own satisfaction, I want to let you into a little secret: the crisp, new bills in that big walletful of notes which tempted you into my trap, were all 'stage money,' except a few from which I loaned you the good 'fiver.' By the way, I don't suppose you'll ever pay back that loan. However, I guess it's money well invested."

"ARBUCKLE has certainly made a decided success of his first assignment, Chief," said one of the men with friendly tact, as he nodded kindly toward the languid figure sitting on the janitor's cot.

"You have indeed, Aleck!" approved the principal cordially.

"Enough of a success to take me away, at last, from that confidential clerkship in your private office, Chief, and keep me out on a man's job?" inquired the youth, with a depth of anxiety he wisely made no vain effort to conceal.

"Yes," replied the other promptly, with a grim smile. "Yes, Aleck, we'll let you stick to real work now."



by Talbot Mundy

HE STARTED in by being born at sea, in the middle of a howling storm while his mother was on her way to England from South Africa; and he has been proving almost ever since that this twentieth century of ours is the only true and genuine age of adventure, King Arthur and Captain Cook and Morgan notwithstanding.

There are somewhere about five feet five inches of him—five feet five inches of dapper, well-dressed, wide-awake electric energy, with a blue eye and a Captain Kettle beard. Yes, it's a red beard, cut torpedo-shape. He seems to be built on wire springs, and it is all that he can do to sit still long enough to eat his dinner.

They found out at Harrow that he was restless; he displayed no over-weening interest in book-work, and he did like games

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and going out of bounds; and looking for trouble seemed second nature to him. So he left Harrow at the age of fifteen, and quarreled with his people on the strength of it.

There is only one way that Ansell has of quarreling: he has got to win; he won that time—collected ten thousand dollars that were his by right—and left. He went on a wild spree through the States until broke and then took a ticket for the West. He did not stop going until he reached Calgary, Canada, which was quite a small pin-point on the map in those days, and was nearly far enough away from the madding crowd to satisfy even him.

He was a good horseman, thanks to his South African up-bringing, and that stood him in good stead, for he was destined to punch cows for the next nine months, and he made good at the game consistently until the "go-fever" got hold of him once more. Calgary and the ways of half-wild cattle had lost their novelty; he yearned to tackle something really thrilling, so he struck the trail again.

The ten thousand dollars that he took with him from England seem to have disappeared at about the same time that the new *wanderlust* took hold of him; conceivably their loss had some bearing on his desire for green fields and pastures new; at all events he drifted into British Columbia, and took a job as fireman on a coastwise steamship, the *Islander*.

Then he tried a spell ashore, working as a dock-hand, and made good money until the bucko mate of a tramp steamer found fault with his method of coaling ship; the subsequent discussion was helped out by a lump of coal, propelled through the air by Ansell, who lost his job, but got that much the better of the bucko mate. The mate went to hospital, and T. C. Ansell set out quite cheerily to look for fresh adventures.

Having never even seen the inside of a machine-shop it was perfectly natural that he should ask for a job as machinist. Getting what he asks for has always been one of his strong points, but this time he had to be contented with the half of it; he was hired as machinist's helper, and after smashing a few pieces of quite expensive machinery and getting into several new sorts of trouble he became efficient—so efficient that his boss employed him on repairs to incoming steamships.

He was still helper, and the man he helped used to let him do the work while he himself tried how often he could see the bottom of a whisky-flask; that led by natural stages to a quarrel, with the inevitable result. Once more Ansell won, and once more he lost his job.

BEATING THE BULLY

A LOGGING-CAMP was his next sphere of activity, and there he had a gorgeous opportunity of meeting up with a brand-new kind of trouble. He met it quite half-way. He was hired at a certain number of dollars per day, along with some fifty other men, and shipped round by steamer to the lumber camp. He was quite the smallest man in camp, and one of the most efficient, for he is as tough and lively as a fox-terrier. For a month he won golden opinions. Then he discovered that he and the other men were being paid at the rate of fifty cents per day less than the sum that had been bargained for. So he organized a strike.

They run a logging-camp on much the same system as they do a Blue-nose sailing-ship; that is to say, they keep a bully foreman, with a fist like a good-sized ham to settle arguments. Six-feet-two of fighting lumberman advanced at a run to whip the talk out of five-foot-five-inch Ansell, and Ansell licked him—fought him for half an hour in the old primitive style, teeth, feet, nails, anything and everything, and licked him properly, while the camp looked on and roared delight!

Ansell had won again; the men drew their pay-checks and demanded to be shipped back to where they came from, Ansell among them; and he was so far from losing his job this time that on the way down his boss offered him the job of foreman. However, he declined it. The Klondike rush had started, and you could have no more kept Ansell in town than you could imprison detonated dynamite. He lit out for Klondike straight-away, shipping as third mate on the *Danube* of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Co.

FORTUNE'S BUFFETS AND REWARDS

STORIES innumerable have been told of the terrors of the White Horse Pass, on the road to Klondike, quite enough of them for every one to know that that was no fair

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going for a little man. Giants—huge, hefty miners used to the north Canadian Winter—curled up and died on that trail. There were old hands who had nothing but their own weight to carry, who lay down and perished on the roadside from sheer exhaustion.

Ansell, who weighs possibly one hundred and fifteen pounds, made a living packing loads to the top of the pass, forty cents per pound. When he had made one journey he came back and made another, and then another until he had saved enough to start adventuring again. He didn't call packing up the White Horse Pass adventuring. That was just business.

He got into Dawson City but, sick of being bossed in British territory, he went down to Alaska after that, and he was trading at St. Michaels when news came of the Cape Nome strike.

He heard of it on December 22, 1897; on January the 8th following he packed one ton of provisions on two sledges, and hitched up six and twenty dogs; then, with one lone Indian to help him, he set out on a three-hundred-mile-journey northward. All he knew was that Cape Nome was somewhere across the ice and snow to the north of him, and that he was going by hook or crook to find it.

He did find it, too, for he has never been licked in his life; it took him six weeks though, and he and the Indian were worn to a frazzle. He was the eighteenth man to get there, and was elected Deputy U. S. Mining Recorder for the district.

He pegged out his claim, sold out his balance of grub at two dollars per pound, and started straight back again for more food; and, when you come to think of it, that was not exactly the action of a weakling.

Most men would rather die of hunger at Cape Nome than tackle that journey twice in Winter-time. Ansell made three round trips that Winter, and cleaned up quite a pile of money; he was a capitalist now for the first time in his life, and could suit himself.

He did. He undertook a contract for carrying the U. S. Mails from Cape Nome to St. Michaels—dog-sledging all the way over a trail that was never the same twice running. He covered two thousand eight hundred miles with Uncle Sam's letter-bags during the Winter following.

A HEROIC RESCUE

DURING his second trip with the mails he came across a man on the bank of the Tibotulik River who was in trouble of a kind peculiar to that part of the world: the man's legs had both been frozen, and had not been thawed out properly; he had crawled into his cabin and had lain down to die when Ansell found him.

One of the chief difficulties of trailing in Alaska is that of carrying sufficient food; never under any circumstances does a man carry more than just sufficient for his own needs, and Ansell traveled even lighter than most men; he only had three-quarter rations for himself, and positively nothing to share with chance strangers. However, Ansell is a man.

He packed that fellow on his sledge, cut down his own daily ration to less than half, shared up with him, and started off to save his life! Everything went wrong that trip; even the ice misbehaved itself, and he was forced to camp for two days on the north side of Norton Sound, which is forty-five miles across. That wait very nearly finished up the supply of food, but he figured on getting a fresh supply across the Sound at a place where he knew some Eskimos had a Winter camp.

He went several miles out of his way to reach that camp, and instead of getting food he had to leave the remainder of what he had with the Eskimos. Bears had broken into their cache and had stolen everything, and the Eskimos were starving.

They did not have a thing to eat for thirty-six hours after that—he and the man whose life he was racing against time to save; it was blowing a real Alaska blizzard, but there could be no thought of camping until it passed; it was a case of going on to almost certain death, or remaining there without even one thin chance for life.

And Ansell has never yet experienced the desire to die. He went on, and won again! He reached a Scandinavian mission at Una-la-Kleet, sixty-four miles away, and the Eskimos who lived there provided him with seal blubber and frozen fish. That saved his life, but there was still the other man to think of, and he was off again at once, with the Arctic storm still howling round him, and the trail obscured by swirling snow.

He reached another mission two days

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later, and there the missionary, Dr. Karlsen, fed him on hot tea and good cooked meat both he and his charge ate too much of it, and the two of them lay ill for two days more. Then they were up and away again to Fort St. Michaels, where Dr. Gregory, the Government's Medical Officer, amputated both of the frozen man's legs and saved his life.

You can't lick a man like Ansell; he rested twenty-four hours and started back again, with that Arctic storm still blowing. On the way back he had another adventure: the river that flows into Galovin Bay had been thawed out by a Chinook wind and had spread over the ice, making a double layer. Ansell fell through the top layer of ice, sledge, dogs and all, but it seems you can't freeze him either; he reached Cape Nome again safe and sound.

There were seventy-two men all told, who came down from Cape Nome in the following Spring, and they brought with them four and a half tons of gold; two hundred thousand dollars worth of it were Ansell's. He hit the high places then. There never was such a time as Ansell had with that two hundred thousand dollars, and the whole of the United States knew beyond any shadow of a doubt that T. C. Ansell was in luck.

You can judge how long the money lasted, and the gorgeous kind of splurge he made with it, when you realize that he had just about enough left to take him to South Africa when the Boer War broke out. He joined Kitchener's Fighting Scouts the moment he arrived at Cape Town, and fought right through the war, getting two medals and seven bars.

THE BOER WAR AND ZANZIBAR

KITCHENER'S Fighting Scouts made quite some history, and T. C. Ansell did his share of it. Theirs was the hard work of the war—keeping in touch with an elusive enemy—all kicks and hunger and complaints, and mighty little glory, if newspaper notoriety is glory. They got credit from the men who knew, and to have remained an active member of that corps from the beginning of the Boer War to the end of it is *cachet* enough for any man.

Ansell was present, among other fights, at Paardeburg, where Cronje surrendered; he was one of the first men to break into Cronje's laager, and his share of the loot was Cronje's silver snuff-box—still one of his most treasured possessions.

When the war was over he ran transport for a while, and when he got tired of that he became agent for the Transvaal mines, recruiting black labor in Portuguese East Africa; his adventures down on that part of the Low Veldt would fill a book.

He made quite a lot of money at the recruiting game—they paid ten dollars a head for black boys—but things began to grow monotonous; there was no scrapping, for one thing. So he left Portuguese country and took steamer to Zanzibar. From there he crossed to Bergamoyo in German East Africa, and started on a cross-country trading trip to Ujiji, on the shore of Lake Tanganyka; he reached there, but he reached there broke; about his only possession was a dose of fever, and while delirious with it, his boys ran away and left him.

So he started back again, with only four boys; it is a good long walk for a sick man from Ujiji to the coast, but he got back again and reached Zanzibar, not by a long way the first man to lose everything he had in that God-forgotten country.

At Zanzibar he fell in with a trader by the name of Charlesworth, and that gentleman helped him by buying him a passage to London on a twelve-hundred-ton German tramp steamer named the *Kaiser*. It was a third-class passage, and the *Kaiser* was loaded up with cockroaches and raw sugar—the cockroaches preponderating. They were a special brand of roaches—sugar-fed, of course, and sleek; they got on even Ansell's nerves, and he interviewed the skipper, who turned out to be "a fine old sport." The skipper gave him a cabin to himself, and he reached Rotterdam after a thirty-eight days' passage, not much the worse for wear.

JAUNTS TO THE ORIENT

HE REACHED London with about seventy-five cents in his pocket, but he ran into a man there who owed him money, and succeeded in collecting a hundred dollars of it. The hundred was sufficient to take him, third class, to Singapore, so he went there, and got a job at once as assistant governor of the prison.

There wasn't much excitement in that,

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beyond tackling mutinous prisoners now and then, so on one of his free days he went to see a rich planter who he heard intended traveling through the China Seas. The planter hired him as private secretary, and took him to Canton, and thence to every port in China.

On the way he kept his eyes open, and when a chance to make money in a spice deal on his own account happened along, he took it with both hands, and promptly, making a nice little pile. The planter had to look for another secretary at short notice, for Ansell does not believe in working for other people so long as he has money in the bank.

He took a trip then to Japan, and from there to Guatemala, Mexico and San Domingo, "having a look at things" and not discovering much that interested him sufficiently to keep him anchored for a while; he did practically no scrapping about that time, except a small revolution in Haiti which only lasted three months. He reached England again with exactly sufficient money to pay for his first-class passage to South Africa.

He bought a ticket and went aboard the first outward-bound Castle Liner. He saw a lady on board who appeared to him much the best thing he had seen in all his travels, and before the steamer had left Southampton four days behind he was engaged to marry her. He had hardly a dime in his pocket, but he married her the moment that he reached Cape Town, and has never regretted it.

FIGHTING THE ZULUS

PROVIDING for a wife is child's play to Ansell anyhow. Being broke did not disturb him in the least. He went to Port Elizabeth, and secured a trading outfit "on his face;" he led what he is pleased to call a quiet life after that, trading for instance in Basutoland, and making money. He would probably have continued trading for a while, but news came of an expected rising of the Zulus in the neighborhood of Durban; and even a brand-new wife could not keep Ansell out of the fighting line. He took his wife to Durban, and left her there with friends; then he joined a local corps of sharp-shooters, and fought Bambaata's men for nine months; it was the best in fighting he had seen yet, and he simply reveled in it.

His wife, however, grew a little weary of being left alone in Durban, and sent him a telegram to say that she was dying; he hurried back to her to find that she was perfectly fit and well, but as he says himself, "It didn't matter; the big fighting was all over by that time; I didn't miss much! However, they gave me a medal and one bar."

Then he took his wife on a trip to Europe, and showed her pretty nearly everything worth seeing, tearing through the Continent in almost American style. When he was tired of that, he returned to South Africa, and lost every penny he had in a big machinery deal.

He was dead stone broke, with a wife on his hands, and he was just as cheery and unconcerned as though he had made another fortune.

He got busy again, of course, and made another fortune—that being his particularly strong point. But his success is just a little too recent to come under the heading of past history. He is such a big man now that it might harm him to discuss his present business.

He is thirty-three years old, and he has lived every single second of the time. If ever there was a rolling stone, that stone is T. C. Ansell, and he hasn't done rolling yet by a long way. Wiseacres will tell you that it is better to stay anchored in one place, and to gather what moss may grow around you. Suit yourselves, gentlemen! Suit yourselves!

Mr. Ansell is at present in business as a pretty big capitalist, and rather likes it; he has seen most of the world, had a good time, and made money. He is getting restless though, and if the scrapping looks like coming to a head in Mexico in the near future, he expects to go there, and "put in a lick." It will probably be some sized lick.

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Out of Prison

A tale of Dick and Captain Doricot

by

H. C. Bailey*

IN THE year Queen Mary died, four men sailed an open boat from Tripoli to Alexandria. It was probably the greatest deed done in 1558, and is now for the first time recorded.

Let us celebrate, to the extent of our abilities, Captain Nicholas Doricot. To rescue a friend who lay in slavery in Alexandria, he inveigled a crew and stole a ship. Ship and crew, save three sturdy, skeptical men, he lost off Tripoli. It never occurred to him, I suppose, to give up the quest.

Their boat was no larger than a whaler, and, you may be sure, less seaworthy. She was furnished with such dregs of food and water and tackle as they could find aboard a battered, plundered Turkish ship. They made a voyage of a thousand miles and more along an unknown, harborless, barren coast, with nothing but hope and courage to assure them fresh provisions.

I count it as great a deed as that run home from San Juan d'Ulloa with half a crew of broken men which established the fame of John Hawkins. And the end of this venture could be nothing but a venture more perilous.

How Doricot made them go his way is the secret of a man born for mad hopes and imperious command and glorious failure. They must have seen the folly of it. That four men should dash themselves upon the forts of Alexandria to rescue an Englishman from the bagnio was plainly no better than coöperative suicide. The prisoner was nothing to any one of them save Doricot. They could have sailed their boat for Malta and made sure of safety under the banner of the Knights. But Doricot bade them through madness to wilder madness and they obeyed.

So by a miracle of will and courage to

*See page 412.

IN THE September ADVENTURE there was a story called "Black Magic," with its scene laid in England just before the reign of Queen Elizabeth. The hero was of a kind new to fiction—Dick, a hulking lout of a Berkshire shepherd, generally regarded as a bit lacking in his wits. But the reader gradually sees that Dick is very far from lacking in his wits. Hidden under his stupid manner and appearance is a master mind in craft, generalship and knowledge of human nature. In "Black Magic" Dick cleverly saves Gabriel Rymingtowne, lord of Assynton Manor, from the murderous plot of a relative who covets his estates and his daughter. It becomes evident that Dick loves Mary Rymingtowne. Therefore, he goes forth to win his fortune. In "The Venture of Captain Doricot" (March) Dick meets with an adventurer who boasts an opportunity for a rich voyage to the Orient, but has neither ship nor gold nor men. By force of wits and hands, they gain a sum of money and set out together for Bristol, each recognizing in the other a useful companion. "The Alderman's Voyage" (April) tells how Dick and Doricot secure the good ship *Toby* for their venture, and kidnap its owner, the fat and pursy Alderman. In "The Women in the Veil" (May), after a great sea-fight with the Turks and an escape from the galleys in an open boat, Dick, the Alderman, the boatswain and Doricot land on the coast of Egypt, Doricot still intent on rescuing an old comrade from slavery in Alexandria.

THE EDITOR.

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Alexandria they came. It was in the noon glare that they first had sight of the shaft of Pharos and Pompey's Pillar, vague, as the hot air quivered in waves; and all about them, like a dream-city built of cloud, crowded houses and arsenal and forts embraced by the sea. But they had seen many a city before as like the real as this, cities which vanished when a man drew near, cities of mirage. It only moved them to break a poor joke or two upon Doricot.

"Fairy-land, ahoy! Here's another o' your fancy towns, Cap'n. Bid un wait for 'e now, do 'e, this time."

And Doricot nodded and said:

"Carry on, carry on."

He believed in his eyes, perhaps, no more than any other of that shrunken scorched company, but he still believed in his will.

All day long, as the boat slid slowly through an oily sea, the vague city stayed in sight, and when the sun fell behind them and the reverberating air grew still, tower and pinnacle and wall and the jumble of houses were seen solid, glowing stone, sharp against sky and sea. Then three of them began to chatter about it eagerly, which was fort and which the old harbor and which the mole and which the bagnio. But Dick who had the tiller, growled out:

"Now we'm seeing what fools we be," and when they turned upon him: "Will I run her nose on that great tower yonder?"

Doricot laughed:

"If I had a hundred the like of you, my lad, I'd take the whole heathen town."

"Being as it is, the heathen be more like to take we," Dick grumbled.

Doricot laughed again and took the tiller, and they ran the boat ashore and made a meal of dates and dried fish and water from a brackish pool, and slept on the sand.

IN THE MORNING found three of them still happy with excitement. Doricot strutted about his bathing with elasticity. He felt himself already the whirling hero of impossible achievements. The boatswain and the alderman, it is to be suspected, apart from some small capacity for imbibing intoxication from him, owed their enthusiasm to the prospect of coming again into the world, of moving among other men again. For they were tired of each other and their lonely boat and desolate shores. But Richard Rymingtowne, whose ascetically practical mind cared for none of these things, remained morose.

When they hid their boat in the sand and started to fetch a compass about the city he followed at Doricot's heel like a dog, but a sullen dog. Doricot designed to come in from the eastern side, where the harbor for foreign ships was, and to learn the ways of Alexandria and gather such information as they could, posing as Greek seamen or Levantines. After their scorching and hard fare they looked the parts well enough.

The Alexandria to which they came was little like the busy port of our time, still less the teeming city of palaces of the ancient world. On the verge and in the very midst were great spaces of empty buildings falling to ruin. Only the arsenal and the forts and the bagnio stood sound and strong. Its quays, its streets were idle; its bazaars were shabby, mean, colorless. It had lost its business and its wealth.

In the foreign harbor lay nothing but a few small Levantine *feluccas*. It was only on the other side of the isthmus where slaves toiled on the mole, where the galleys were drawn high on the beach and slaves scoured their hulls, that there was life and vigor. Alexandria was little but a dockyard of pirates.

Since one stranger makes less mark in a town than a company, Doricot bade his men scatter, yet keep him always in sight. But there was little need of such caution. Few looked twice at them. A Greek, an Italian sailor was nothing strange in the sleepy streets. It seemed as if no mortal race could be strange there. The people of Alexandria were in all shades of color from black to white, in all kinds of dress from the nearly nothing that emphasized a sleek black body to the heavy, elaborate gaberdines of Jews from Turkestan.

There were thin-shanked negroes and sturdy fellaheen of sullen, solid, brown faces, both all but naked, and in among them Italians with all the glory of ruff and trunk hose. There were lithe Arabs and little timid, nervous Greeks and yellow, hairless Mongol slave-dealers, and here and there a huge, fair-haired Slav from the Balkans or the Euxine.

But though the races were many, there were not many people to count. They were all idle and listless, as though in Alexandria there was nothing to do or hear or see.

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Even the Jews lounged and shuffled and dawdled as they went their way. The city had no life, except in its hard-driven slaves and their pirate masters.

On the forts that towered over the western harbor, on the shapeless mass of the arsenal, on the square, surly ugliness of the bagnio, life enough had been spent and was being spent still. They bore no sign of weakness or decay or sloth. Their walls stood sound and strong. All about them, to the very crevices in the stones, was swept and garnished with womanly precision. They were kept as only a place can be kept when human flesh is used without thrift or mercy. They made a queer grim contrast to the decay and filth, the listless idleness of all the rest of the town.

DORICOT, who had bidden his little company play the fool in a bazaar till he called them out of it, strutted past the forts and as near the bagnio as he dared, marked the gates and the jailer's house, and turned to the harbor. He stood a little while watching the horde of slaves laboring naked in the glare about the galleys. Among them overseers lounged, striking here and there wantonly. Doricot saw lines of blood break red on the white backs. That was the life of his friend!

He came back to his men in the bazaar and, "Now I know Alexandria," said he, and therewith turned into a shop which displayed nothing but a few trinkets of tarnished silver. Its master was a Jew. He blinked at Doricot from the floor and pulled himself to his feet and made salaam. Doricot, chattering bad Italian very fast, held out in the palm of his hand a gold coin, an English angel. It was to be understood that he had won it from a seaman at Rhodes over the dice-box, that it was French and worth two hundred aspers. Would Father Abraham change it for him?

Father Abraham peered at it and weighed it in his hand, and peered at it again and shook his head. He lamented that Doricot had been deceived by a godless man. The thing was not worth two hundred aspers or one. Not French, but English.

Doricot laughed scornfully. English? Who ever heard of anything English in the Levant? No Englishman had ever been seen east of Venice. Father Abraham was trying to cheat him.

Father Abraham called upon the name of God for strength to survive his amazement. Why, month after month the galleys towed English ships into harbor. The bagnio was full of English slaves.

Doricot called Father Abraham the father of lies.

"Show me an Englishman in Alexandria and I'll eat him!"

Father Abraham compared him to the children who mocked at the prophet and were eaten by the bear.

Doricot called Father Abraham an oily, wordy rascal. The English were fierce devils who would never be taken alive. Not an Englishman was ever born who would obey a Moslem. They were not beastly Jews.

It was the Jew's turn to laugh.

"Oh, oh, they are all brave! Yes, they are all lions! Not like a poor old Jew. Like the brave Captain of the *Golden Lion.* Go to him and tell him he is so brave, my son."

Doricot stiffened. Here was news indeed, and something more than he had played for. The *Golden Lion* was the ship of his friend Matt Winkfield! Why should the Jew choose to jeer at Winkfield's courage? But he showed only careless impatience.

"What have I to do with your *Golden Lions?* Why do you babble useless lies? I know the English. A breed of savage fools. As for their wits—" he snapped his fingers. "But brave to madness—all the world knows that."

"Ay, ay, young men know all things. Oh, yes, he has no wits, my lord of the *Golden Lion.* Oh yes, he is madly brave. That is how he lives in his fine house."

Doricot wondered more and more. But he had no mind to wake Jewish suspicions. So he became impatient.

"To the fiend with you and your *Golden Lion*! How much for my French coin?"

"For your English angel," the Jew sniffed, "fifty aspers."

Then they higgled a little while, till Doricot went grumbling off with fifty-one. He found his men gaping dutifully where they had been left. But Dick stared hard at him and drawled out:

"You'll ha' been cheated."

"I wonder," Doricot muttered.

One of the many donkeys laden with fruit shouldered past him and he turned to its driver and began to buy a pumpkin. If

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any one knew all the houses of Alexandria it must be the peddlers of fruit. His questions hid craftily what he had in mind, so craftily that the first lad and the next and the next gave him only useless answers. He had wandered through half a score of streets, every man of his company had a pumpkin to carry, before a fragile little Copt told him of a stranger, a Ferangi, a yellow-haired man, a seaman captured by the galleys, who had a house by the ruins of Hadrian's Wall toward the Catacombs. Then Doricot began to bite his lips.

In the shade of the ruins they ate onions and pumpkins. In the shade of the ruins they waited. There was no mistaking the house. It stood in the midst of desolation. All about it others were empty and falling to wreck. In their courtyards and gardens a few hovels had been built of their decay. This one house alone made any pretense of life and use. It was in no other way distinguished, neither large nor small, neither splendid nor mean. The yellow stone walls were broken with courses of red and black. It had the common array of tiny barred windows below and an overhanging upper story with little perforated balconies. The door was low and narrow, and through the doorway they could see only a blank wall and a drowsy black negro.

II

WHEN the shadows were falling long, there came by the road from the city a man all in white, turban and loose tunic and trousers. He was followed by two negroes all shining black, save for the loin-cloth. Doricot whistled a little between his teeth. As the procession came near, they saw that the man had a yellow beard. Doricot ran out of the shadow.

"Why, Matt, here's wonders!" said he.

The man started back.

Doricot laughed and held out his hand.

"How goes it?"

"What o' God's name brought you here?" said Winkfield in a low voice, drawing back still.

"You!" Doricot thrust the hand upon him.

He took it in a loose grip, staring and muttering:

"What do you want of me?"

"The devil!" Doricot cried. "I thought you was wanting me, my dear!"

Winkfield let his hand fall.

"What do you mean? What have you heard?"

"I heard you were a slave, Matt," said Doricot with a gentleness strange to his voice.

"Well, I am a slave," Winkfield cried angrily. "Do you think I am not a slave?"

"God bless you," said Dick in the background, "you look more like a bashaw with fifty wives."

Doricot turned on him.

"Who bade thee yelp, puppy?"

"These be your men?" Winkfield cried. "How many are you then?"

"We be four men. Which heard you was taken by the heathen and are come to save you and yours."

"You are mad!" Winkfield muttered. He looked nervously about him. There was no one in sight save some fellaheen among the hovels, but he caught Doricot's arm and cried, "Well, come in, come in, we can not talk here."

They went through the low doorway and, turning, came into a paved courtyard where a fountain gleamed. In one corner the earth was bare and a vine and fig-trees grew up latticework, making shade for a low stone bench strewn with cushions. Winkfield started that way and then checked, and muttering, "No, best within," brought them to a room with mosaic floor and panels of sandalwood. He dropped upon a divan, the strength seemed to go out of his body and he sat in a heap.

"Well, sit, sit!" he cried petulantly. "You can sit yourselves down for sure."

With some gaping at the worn splendor of the room, down they sat. He clapped his hands and a veiled woman darted in, a tiny creature all shimmering silk. He snapped something angry at her in Arabic and she fled. After a moment, an Egyptian lad came with a tray of coffee and yellow bread and little cakes.

"Ay, for a man that's a slave, you ha' very pretty living," said Dick with a sniff.

Winkfield shifted on his cushions and scowled at him, and looked at Doricot and looked away again.

"Do you come here to mock me?" he said shrilly.

"Mock ye now!" Dick drawled. "To my thinking, 'tis you'm mocking we. We come nigh parching ourselves to death for to help a poor soul that is naked and chain-

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ed and whipped, and here be you fat and kicking, with black slaves and brown, and pretty girls to your whistle. Mock ye, says you! It's you has the laugh, my lad."

"Be silent, you!" quoth Doricot over his shoulder. "But faith, Matt, the lads have gone through something to come at you, and here you are, mighty lordly. What's the way of it?"

"Why did you come?" said Winkfield.

"Why?" Doricot's brow proclaimed surprise. "Did you think Nick Doricot would hear of you a slave to these beastly heathen and not make a venture to win you free? *Madre Dios*, we know each other, you and I!"

"You were mad to come," said Winkfield gloomily.

"*S'il vous plaît*," quoth Doricot. "But we're here."

Winkfield stared at the ground.

"Why, man, take heart!" Doricot slapped him on the shoulder. "We'll have you on the sea for England before——"

Winkfield started and cried out:

"England! How can I go to England? I mean—why, you are mad."

Doricot shrugged.

"For what I see, you could sail to-night. To be sure, there's your crew."

"What do you mean? What do you know of my crew?" Winkfield cried fiercely.

"Less we know about the gentleman, better he likes it, seemly," Dick drawled.

"Why, what's the matter?" said Doricot. "I see you ha' found a way to make yourself easy, but——"

"I tell you I am a slave. As much a slave as if they had me in the bagnio. And God knows, more. I am their slave, I say."

"'Tis a fat life, seemly," quoth Dick.

"You are out of the bagnio, at least," said Doricot with a frown. "They have your lads in it still."

"Is that my fault?" Winkfield snarled.

"Who says so?" Doricot was plainly surprised in him. "But there they are, sweating their lives out under the lash, and you——" he shrugged his shoulders.

"Can I help it?" Winkfield cried petulantly. "Besides, they be most of them dead. The better for them."

"There's what I'd never say," quoth Doricot. "Most of them dead! Well, you're the Captain of them all."

"What do you mean? We had four galleys upon us. We were becalmed off Candia. They came upon us in the night. What was the use of fighting?"

Doricot frowned.

"*Mordieu*, but you fought your ship, Matt?"

"Fought till we were all down," Winkfield muttered, "and the most of us never got up again." Then suddenly he cried out, "I tell you, I wish often I had been one of them!"

He turned his face away.

Doricot nodded.

"I know."

Dick slunk silently out of the room.

"Still, you know, you ben't one of them," said the boatswain stolidly, "so why ben't you in the bagnio with t'others?"

Winkfield looked round with something furtive in his eyes:

"The Turks let me out because I know their tongue, because I could interpret for them, because I could serve them in their traffics. I swear I am more a slave than any."

Doricot clicked his tongue.

"So. Well now, there's to get your lads out of the bagnio and sail away."

Winkfield lost breath.

"Out of the bagnio?" he gasped.

"*Madonna*, you would not leave your lads behind?" Doricot cried.

Winkfield stammered.

"But you are mad, mad, I tell you! There's no way."

"I saw a dozen this morning. What the devil! There be slaves enough here to eat all the Turks and their forts atop!" He laughed. "What a venture! And with you that know the Turks and their ways and their speech and go and come amongst them—why, it's fair wind and a clear sky!" Winkfield started up. "Nay, man, sit down and we'll plan it all in an hour."

Winkfield stared at him as if he were raving.

"The forts!" he said. "The guns! They have a thousand men ever under arms and more, yes, and more. Go and meddle with the slaves, and they'll have you on the hooks in an hour."

"Not me, my lad," Doricot laughed. "Come, sit down, and talk sense."

"You never mean it. You——"

"I mean it and I'll do it and you shall help me, Matt."

"Oh, you're mad!" Winkfield cried and

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stared at him a moment and turned away.

Doricot sprang after him.

"Come, Matt, they've broke your spirit, but we'll mend it again. Come, sit down to the plan."

"No, I must go to the arsenal. I—it is an order. I dare not stay."

"Have with you, then."

Again Winkfield stared at him before he spoke.

"No, it is not safe. You must stay here. Keep close. You must not go out. It is not safe."

"*S'il vous plaît,*" Doricot shrugged. "When you come back, then."

Winkfield laughed drearily.

"When I come back!" Then he looked round the room and gave a start. "Why, where's the other, the big fellow? Where has he gone?"

"Diccon?" Doricot looked. "Oh, after some mischief. It's a roguish lad. But never fear. Diccon can take care of himself."

"I will send a black after him," said Winkfield nervously. "Lest he come to harm. Lest he come to harm," and hurried out. He was so interested in Dick that he sent three.

DICK RYMINGTOWNE was no farther away than the nearest heap of stones. That is doubtless why they did not find him. He saw them range away among the ruined houses, heard them chattering questions he did not understand, and guessed that they were looking for him and chuckled. He saw Winkfield go off at a pace that was almost a run, and was pleased with himself. It is not to be supposed that he had any foresight of what was to happen, that he guessed what was in Winkfield's mind, or the object of his errand.

If you ask why he slunk out of the room and why he wanted to hide, the only answer is that Winkfield bred in him suspicion. He had not any notion what Mr. Winkfield had been doing or what he was likely to do. He was entirely certain that the man had done something he was ashamed of and, if he saw his account in doing the like again, would not hesitate. Therefore Dick preferred to watch him from a convenient distance. To the prosperous end of his life, after much varied business with rascals, Dick Rymingtowne preserved for Matt Winkfield his bitterest contempt. Not because the man was a dirtier rascal than others, but because he was a rascal ashamed of his rascality, a rascal who kept his conscience alive for the sake of being uncomfortable.

Dick waited among the ruins, saw the negroes go back to the house and the door shut behind them, and waited still while the twilight faded into dark. It had not been dark long before there came from the city a close-marching company. To the door of the house they came and halted, and Dick, peering through the gloom, saw weapons. When the door opened, the light fell upon steel. They passed quickly in.

Perhaps he had a wild chivalrous impulse to rush to his friends, shout alarm, join them for better or worse. He was still young. It is more likely that he congratulated himself on his good sense in having run away. He was always passionately practical. Whatever was in his head, he lay still. He heard a little shouting, a little noise, and then out from the house the armed men came again, but more slowly, in some disorder.

It was plain that they had in their midst prisoners who were giving trouble. The sound of threats and blows and scuffling broke the tramp of the march. Slowly they made for the city again and were lost in the night. It may be that Dick thought for a moment of rushing upon them and daring the mad chance of a surprise. It is much more likely that he was thinking exclusively of Matt Winkfield.

For he understood very well what had happened. The excellent Winkfield must have hurried to the city to bring down the Turkish soldiery on Doricot, to get him safely chained in the bagnio. Why? There were reasons enough obvious. It was plain that, by some trick or treachery, Winkfield had won for himself the favor and bounty of the Turks; no less plain that he was afraid of any free Englishman coming to know of his prosperity.

He had something foul to hide. He would be ready to bury Doricot alive for that. It was plain, too, that he was afraid Doricot's coming might make the Turks suspicious, afraid that Doricot might involve him in some dangerous venture. It was mere self-preservation to betray Doricot swiftly. Dick Rymingtowne, I suppose, might have admired the cold villainy of a man's selling to slavery the friend who had

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put life in peril to rescue him from that.

But Dick happened to be engaged on the other side, and he never denied a debt of friendship or hate or cash. Also, the sickly conscience, the nervousness of Winkfield, annoyed him vastly. So of Matt Winkfield he thought very hard, and from one of the gardens he stole a meal of cucumbers and onions and went to sleep.

For some days his history is a tale of petty theft and burglary. He was too cautious to go into the city by daylight, but he made up for his idleness after dark. What he stole, I do not certainly know, for his papers are only explicit about two knives, whereof one, ivory hilted and chased, is still in his family. He liked the knife as a weapon. But we should be wronging him to suppose that when he played the burglar he failed to find any money. The days he spent lurking in the Catacombs, where he was only disturbed by mice and a weasel. He lived well enough on the stuff in the gardens.

HE DID not try to learn anything of Doricot or the others. He kept himself well away from Winkfield. But when he went into the city at dusk his eyes and his ears were wide open. That the slaves who worked on the ships and the mole were driven into the bagnio before dark, he could indeed have guessed without seeing. It was something to know that the bagnio mounted neither guard nor sentinels, but he could hardly hope to storm it by himself. Though its slaves were guarded by nothing but walls and gates and a few warders, no trick that he could think of would give him the keys.

The soldiery which garrisoned the forts and gave the galleys their fighting-men seemed to live in a loose discipline. They furnished, of course, companies to march the slaves down to work, to guard them while they worked and to march them back again. Save for that, they seemed to go where they chose and do what they chose, which was chiefly nothing. They lounged and slept anywhere and everywhere.

When he had given Winkfield some days of quiet, time to believe that the man who escaped was of no importance, he began to lurk about the house again. That placid waiting, those thoughtful burglaries, express his character well. He never spoiled anything by haste. He never weakened in purpose by delay. It was some days more before he found his chance. Again and again Winkfield passed by daylight and with slaves behind him. There was a night at last when he came home alone. He had been drinking, to judge of his gait, something not allowed by the Koran. Dick rose at his side, struck him on the temple with a knife's hilt, and caught him as he fell stunned. He was dragged aside among the ruins, he was gagged and bound with his own turban. Dick hoisted him like a sack and carried him away to the Catacombs.

III

WHEN Winkfield came to himself, he was in a tomb hewn from the rock. Moonlight streaming through a small hole above suggested infinite space of gloom, and, falling upon Dick's head as he sat eating a pumpkin, endowed him with an incongruous sanctity. Winkfield stirred in his bonds and, still unaware of them, did not understand why he could not move. He stared at Dick and tried to speak, and hardly understood why he only spluttered. Dick heard him and took off the gag.

"What is it?" said Winkfield feebly, and then was surprised to hear himself talking English.

"We'm making a beginning," quoth Dick cheerfully and went on with his pumpkin.

Winkfield stammered at him.

"You—you—you are the lad who came with Doricot!"

"Ay, your mind's working," Dick encouraged him.

Winkfield seemed suddenly to feel his bonds. He writhed and cried out:

"Let me loose, you rascal!"

"Nay, but 'tis not working well," Dick complained. "Why would I tie you up if I was to let you loose now?"

"I'll have you under the bastinado!" Winkfield cried. "I'll have you on the hooks for it!" Dick threw a piece of pumpkin skin at him and went on eating. "You dull lout!" Winkfield screamed with an oath, "you're cutting your own throat. You fool, all my slaves, I tell you, all the city will be seeking me!"

"Well, this burrow was some old fellow's grave," Dick spoke with his mouth full. "'Twill do mighty well for yourn."

"Do you mean to kill me?" Winkfield

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cried. Dick went on eating. "Why, what have I done to you? I say, how will it serve you?"

"Aw," Dick chuckled, "to be sure it would be a comfort. Look 'e, my lad, if you've a mind to stay alive you'll ha' need to be mighty useful. For I'd sooner kill 'e than not. Just for the sake of it. So now, what ha' you done with your little friend Nick Doricot?" Winkfield protested, calling more than once on the name of God, that he had done nothing to Doricot, knew nothing of him. Dick stared at him and nodded. "Ay, ay, you've a mind to be no use. And, to be sure, I like it best so."

He took out a knife and tried its edge on his thumb.

"What do you mean?" Winkfield screamed. "He is in the bagnio with the others. What is that to me? I could not help it. I could not save him. You do not understand. I am a slave myself."

"In the bagnio with the others," Dick repeated. "He is alive, then."

"How do I know? I dare not so much as ask. Why, he has made them suspect me. He has ruined me. He——"

"You rat," quoth Dick, "you'd sell your soul to be sure he was dead! Look 'e now, you put un into the bagnio. 'Tis for you to find a way to get him out. And if you do not, you shall die in this grave here."

"Get him out?" Winkfield gasped in astonishment unfeigned. "You are mad." Then he checked suddenly and drew in his breath. "Nay, but i' faith, I will do what I can. I will petition the bashaw. I will spend my last *zecchin*. But I had begun upon that already, I promise you. I had been about it all day. Why, I had good hopes of Hassan, the secretary, who is much my friend." He laughed nervously. "Why, you are mighty hard on your friends. As if it needed all this to make me work for Nick Doricot! Why, my friend, I was desperate when I heard they had tracked him to my house and taken him there. I swore I would never rest nor spare nothing till I had him free."

At this point, Dick interrupted with a hearty kick.

"I could break your neck for thinking me fool enough to believe all that. Why, I wouldn't trust 'e a moment, unless I had ye where I could kill 'e quietly. Don't 'e think to be let go, my lad, not till Doricot's out o' prison. What you ha' to do is to tell me how I may get him out. Then off I go and do it. And if you do bungle it so that I never come back, why, you'll never get out of this grave neither!"

Winkfield screamed at him. It was all folly, wildest folly. No slave ever came out of the slavery of the bagnio alive. For one man, a Christian, an Englishman, who was like a baby in that city, to think of tampering with the bagnio, which was strong as the Tower, was the maddest madness. Then he became insinuating and urged again his affection, his devotion to Doricot, his influence with the Turks, the certainty that if he were let go the business would be swiftly done. Why, it was a cruel wrong to Doricot that his efforts should be hampered. And here Dick kicked him again.

Then he began to whine. What could he do? How could he help? It was impossible that Dick could come at Doricot or get him out. And to leave a man there to starve in a grave—in agony, too, for he was so bound that all his limbs throbbed and stung—it was cruel, cruel, cruel!

"Here you bide and here you starve and here you suffer I do hope," quoth Dick, "till I have him out. So best find a way."

Then he began to sob. That was too much for Dick, who fell on him and beat him and gagged him again. To the sound of his muffled moaning Dick fell asleep. So passed that first night in the Catacombs.

IT IS to be supposed that Winkfield suffered in body and mind all night through, but not so much, not so much in mind at least, as Doricot. For Doricot had received enlightenment that day.

When first the three were brought to the bagnio they were stripped and flung into a big dark hall, where other naked men lay huddled close as pigs and in pigsty filth. Then the alderman grumbled:

"Here's the end of another of your pretty plans! Oh, you're a clever, clever fool!"

Doricot had no answer.

But when the boatswain grunted out:

"Well now, that dear little friend of yourn has done mighty well by we. 'Tis a bright fellow, to be sure! 'Tis not every man would ha' thought upon selling the folks that come to fish him out o' the water. Well, I do hope he had a good price for we—I'd not like to think I was sold cheap."

Then Doricot struck at him, was beaten off and struck again. There came all the

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while from Doricot's mouth a sputter of blasphemy. It was in no wise to be supposed that Winkfield had sold them. No man who was better than a mound of flesh would so suppose. Matt Winkfield was a hearty, trusty fellow and the best sea-captain alive. He would surely stand by them manfully—unless—unless he was in trouble himself. Doricot much feared that they had brought suspicion upon him. At which the boatswain guffawed, and the fight began again.

It was only quieted by the men about them who cursed and beat them both impartially for disturbing sleep. The dispute was resumed in the morning by the boatswain telling his tale to a neighbor, with heavy insinuations against Winkfield interrupted by corrective abuse from Doricot. But none of their neighbors, who were all Spaniards, cared the least about them or their fate. So argument languished.

For some days they lay in the bagnio, fed on a pittance of tasteless green bread and stinking water. There was nothing to do but wallow and long for the hour when the armed jailers came with baskets and pitchers. Then, partly from hunger, in part from simple weary hatred of one another, they would fight over the sharing.

But when Doricot grumbled, his neighbors cursed him and bade him be thankful. It was better, they told him, to lie there and fester and rot, than work naked beneath the sun and the whips. And he would have work enough and whip enough, for it was the end of the Summer, and the galleys were coming to harbor, and each must be hauled up the beach, each hull scoured.

A morning came when they were roused with whips and pikes and driven down to the beach. There they hauled at the cables with sobbing lungs, with pulses thudding in head and heart like blows, with backs bleeding deep from the leather thongs, and the sun searing the wounds till half a dozen galleys were high upon the sand and a score of slaves lay lifeless or gasping out life. There they tore the flesh from their hands in scouring the long hulls clean of weed and shell.

AT NOON, when they were let leave their work for a meal, they fell down on the sand where they stood, and lay with heaving sides, heedless of one another or of anything in the world save the moment of rest. Here and there a man would wriggle jerkily like a dog when it has run itself out. And for a while they were dumb as dogs. The fragments of the maize and bean-flour bread passed from listless hand to hand. Bodies quivering with strain and burning with thirst had no hunger. But when pumpkins were tossed among them there was something of a struggle. By the oaths about him, Doricot knew that he had fallen among Englishmen and said so.

"English, be you?" quoth one. "How then? The heathen ha' brought in no English ship this many months. And you be new. How did they catch you?"

"Ask Captain Matt Winkfield," said the boatswain with a grimace at Doricot.

On the word there was a stir of interest about them, and blasphemy.

"What, Master Matt's done some more business, has he?" one said. "Come, let's hear!"

Doricot's face was white behind the sweat. "Do you know Matt Winkfield, then?"

"Od rot his soul! We was in his ship."

"Let's hear, my bully," the boatswain cried. "Story for story. 'Tis you to begin. You come here first."

"Story, d'ye say?" a swarthy fellow growled. "There's no story, you fool. We was in his ship off Candia when four galleys come down upon us. 'Twas a southerly wind and we on a lee shore. To be sure, there was nought to be done, but Master Winkfield he never tried for to do it. He had his white flag up almost afore they was aboard. And the next thing we knows is us in the chains heaving at the oars of they galleys while Master Winkfield's up on her poop, hobnobbing with the heathen as fine as a peacock.

"How did he do it, says you? We made that out when we saw the galleys was making nor'west. For our consort, the *Providence*, that had gone to Chio after red malmsey, was to join with us to westward. So the galleys had her too, as here's Johnny Entwistle and Roger Back that was in her to tell, saving that she made a stout fight of it. For she had old Gilbert Hale to her master, and no filthy renegado. Now here we be, living the life of them that's in hell, while Matt Winkfield has his palace and his harem like a bashaw. Od rot his soul!"

The boatswain nudged Doricot.

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"Here's your friend that we come a-saving!"

"D'ye tell me he sold his consort?" said Doricot dully.

The swarthy man cursed him for a fool, and Winkfield by many other names.

"I tell ye he sold his soul for to save his stinking body. How did he do it? He would not fight his ship, he made himself a filthy Mussulman, he showed them how to catch his consort, he's great among the heathen now by what he knows o' Christian ships and where to watch for them. God send him swift to his account!"

Doricot said nothing. Even his friendship could not doubt the tale. He drew himself together and sat pale and breathing hard.

With a passionate cry the alderman struck at him.

"That's the man that you brought us here for!"

Doricot did not strike back. There was a great roar of laughter, and "You come out o' England for Matt Winkfield's sake!" More laughter and more. Doricot sat silent and in the heat he shivered a little.

Then the whistles sounded and they were lashed to their work again. But from that hour Doricot was the butt of all the slaves.

IT MAY be some satisfaction to remember that when the next morning dawned there was a man making Matt Winkfield his butt, a man without mercy for what he hated. In the tomb where Dick Rymingtowne had his prisoner, the morning brought little more light than the moon. Dick woke late, stretched himself, remembered the situation with a chuckle, and turned round to look at Winkfield. Winkfield was asleep, breathing stentorously. Dick shook him, and he gave what would have been a yell but for the gag. Dick plucked the gag off and he began to cry. Dick had been cruel to shake him so; he had pains shooting through all his his limbs; it would kill him to be kept bound.

"It hurts me so, it hurts me so!"

Dick laughed and bade him cry louder.

For a while he did, and then the screams and sobs shrank into a whimper, as a child's rage shrinks, and he plead pitifully again.

"I'll let you loose when I get Doricot loose, my lad. Ha' you found a way? No? To be sure, I begin to think the grave is yourn."

He wailed again at that till Dick thrust the gag upon him and bade him think if he wanted to stay alive.

"You find me a way to come at Doricot by to-night, my lad, or I'll make an end of you, for you'll be no use to me."

Therewith Dick turned and hauled himself out of the tomb. He did not think that any of Winkfield's friends, however much they might miss him, would be looking for him among the Catacombs. But it was as well to make sure.

He did make sure, and saw none. When he came back, Winkfield writhed at him and spluttered:

"Oh, you ha' been thinking, ha' you?" said Dick, and pulled out the gag. But Winkfield only begged for water. Dick thrust pumpkin pulp into his mouth. "Maybe that's the last you'll taste, my lad."

But when Winkfield had gulped it down, he began to speak to some purpose. There was a man, a Spaniard, Valdez by name, who had been taken from the bagnio to serve the treasurer, Ibrahim, and though still a slave was permitted to keep a victualing-house. Thereto resorted others in like case, slaves in the service of private masters, allowed some liberty. Winkfield believed that this Valdez, for all his prosperity was ill affected to the Turks. If any could help Dick to break the bagnio, it was certainly he.

Dick whistled. It might very well be a trap.

"Look 'e, my lad, I've a mind to your Valdez. But if I never come back, you'll lie here and rot. Will I go?"

Winkfield hesitated.

"God help me, what else can I say?" he cried, and began to sob again. Dick looked at him critically and gagged him again and, suddenly inspired by another idea, searched him and found a good deal of money. With that he went off.

He was wary in approaching the city, and came to it from the east, but, once in, he went boldly. None could know him but Winkfield. As he came to the western harbor he stopped suddenly. On the beach a long line of galleys lay careened. One only was afloat and that one lay by the mole, close to the bagnio. At last it seemed that he had fortune on his side.

The victualing-house of Valdez was close by. Dick went in and found some three or

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four men whose race he could not guess, save that they were European, sitting sullenly over wine. He asked for a flagon in English, and they stared at him, surprised, suspicious, not understanding. Then one spoke:

"What's an English tongue to do here, brother?"

"I'm asking you," said Dick, and put his order into the patois he had learned from Doricot.

"We want no strangers here," quoth Valdez.

"'Tis so jolly a life that you have to yourselves." Dick put down a gold-piece. "Is there any man here for a Christian country?"

He took his life in his hand, doubtless, but he had looked his men in the eyes first.

"How o' God's name came you here?" the Englishman cried in English.

"What do you want of us?" said Valdez.

"To break the bagnio," Dick said, and let it sink in. "There be men o' mine inside will gnaw it down with their teeth but they'll be out. There's a man here," he grinned, "that has a use for any who be tired o' slaving to the heathen."

Valdez cried out to the Mother of God that he was mad.

Dick became cold and practical. Not for nothing had he prowled the city through night after night. It was swiftly apparent that he knew Alexandria better than they who had long been its slaves.

"Look 'e now," says he, "there's no guard at the bagnio o' nights. There's nought but a handful o' warders and bolts and bars to keep the slaves in."

"Ay, nought but that and the forts which are full of soldiers!" Valdez sneered.

"Are they so?" Dick took him up quickly. "I would ha' said they pretty soldiers was anywhere but in the forts. All over the city they be at their private pleasures. It would take you an hour to muster a hundred. Well?"

"Well, tell me something that we need telling," quoth Valdez.

"Then I tell you you be fools to be here. Why, you ha' only to cut down a jailer or so and you have the keys, you have the slaves out. And then—why then, there is but one galley afloat and all the others high and dry."

"'Tis always so in the Autumn," said the Englishman dully. "I ha' seen it this ten year. They do always leave one afloat when they careen the fleet—for their letters and such like."

"You ha' seen it this ten year, God help you," Dick said, "and never seen how to use it! Why, my lad, get the slaves aboard that galley and we'll be safe in a Christian land in a week. There's none to follow us with all the other craft high and dry. Ha' you any weapons, now?" he laid more gold on the table.

They stared at him, stupefied. It was some time before one of them muttered something about going too quick. The lethargy of slavery had mastered them. He saw soon that there was nothing to be made of them that night. Perhaps he did not see how much power his confident energy had upon them.

IV

WHEN he went back to the tomb he was well enough pleased to give Winkfield a whole cucumber; to listen with something like patience while Winkfield plead pathetically to be let go; to answer genially:

"You wait awhile, my lad, we'm doing well."

Winkfield was silent a moment and then said:

"Valdez had a mind to join with you?" Dick nodded. "I knew that fellow was a traitor," Winkfield muttered.

At that Dick gave himself to laughter.

But Winkfield had still days and nights to spend tied up in the tomb. Dick had to go often to the squalid little victualing-house by the harbor before the plan was made and the men who were to work it persuaded.

At last, on a moonless night, Winkfield was hauled to the upper air. His legs were loosed, but not his hands, and the gag was left in his mouth. Dick took a grip of his girdle.

"Now march," said he, "and if you try to break from me, my knife's in your spine."

But there was little fear of that. Winkfield could hardly walk. Each step fetched out a groan, and he had to be driven on by the knife-point. So through lonely byways they came to the victualing-house. Four men received Winkfield and thrust him in and locked the door upon him.

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Then they made for the bagnio. Valdez hammered at the gate and asked speech of the jailer, whom he knew. When the man came, they cut him down and seized his lantern and his keys. Rushing in and on, they killed the warders who met them and flung open door after door, shouting to the sleeping slaves in many languages:

"Out, out, the prison is broke!"

But Dick stood in the courtyard and roared again and again,

"Doricot, Nick Doricot! Doricot and the *Toby's* men!" and he held a lantern high.

Through the dark of the surging press they came to him at last. Doricot was laughing like a madman, and he clung about Dick and babbled. Dick held him off with an oath of surprise and, crying, "On to the gate, now!" charged through the crowd.

They were out among the first, for Dick was without mercy, and the alderman and the boatswain behind him wrought mightily. They held together, and the rest of that mad army thrust each for himself. By the gate they found Valdez and his three who sprang to Dick's shout.

"To the galley, away with you!" quoth Dick, and with Valdez at his heels ran to the victualing-house. The door was flung open. Valdez snatched a skin of wine. Dick snatched Winkfield. Together they ran amid the wave of naked men that surged down to the harbor.

Aboard the one floating galley they came. In a moment she was freighted deep. They killed the watchmen with their hands. They crowded to the oar-benches, had the great oars out, stunning one another in their haste, and rowed as they had never rowed beneath the whip. Valdez and his men held the poop. Dick raged among the oarsmen.

Lights were waking in the forts. A gun thundered out and another, but already the galley was beyond the mole. As she rose to the swell of the open sea, lights came down to the beach; they heard shouts of command and the groan of hulls upon the sand. The Turks were for launching their galleys. But all their galleys were dismantled, their slaves were fled. When dawn broke over the dark sea, the galley of the slaves was alone.

It was then that the oarsmen dared a spell of respite. Then they set the great lateen sails and steered west of north. It was then that Dick hauled out of the den beneath the oar-deck Matt Winkfield and cut his bonds and drove him into the cabin where Doricot sat. But as they passed the benches, came a yell of rage and men of Winkfield's ship rushed after them.

Winkfield heard and saw, and fled before them, screaming. So into the cabin he came with naked men after him, wild as hounds, and he flung himself upon Doricot, who sat huddled on the divan, staring like a man in a trance. Winkfield could not speak anything to be understood. He twitched and slobbered wordless cries.

The alderman and Valdez and the rest of the cabin company jeered at him. With a pike snatched from the wall, Dick hardly kept back the men of his crew.

"Let be, let be, here's the man to give him his quittance. Let be, I say!"

But they roared out threats of torture.

Doricot raised himself, and seemed to wake and put the man from him.

"You sold me for a slave, Matt Winkfield, which was your friend. How many Christian men ha' you sold to the heathen?" There was no anger in his voice.

Winkfield cowered down and sobbed out words of no meaning.

"Give him a sword," Doricot said.

He held out his hand to Valdez. Gaping, Valdez drew the simitar from his side. Doricot thrust the hilt into Winkfield's hand, who stared at it and then stared up at Doricot with the face of an imbecile.

"Give me a sword," Doricot said, and the boatswain took one from the cabin wall. Then Doricot drew back a pace and suddenly, in his fierce voice of captaincy—it was the last time Dick heard it—he cried out, "Stand up and fight, Matt!"

Winkfield rose unsteadily, looking all the while with that horrible mindless stare at Doricot. Doricot struck at his sword and it shook. Doricot gave a whirling blow past his eyes. Then he staggered toward Doricot, and Doricot stepped aside and cut down at him where the throat joins the shoulder. He fell down and was covered in his blood.

"It is finished," said Doricot, and sat down and huddled himself together.

That was the manner of the saving of Matt Winkfield. And on the third day out from Alexandria, Doricot died.

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Brethren of the Beach

by H. D. Couzens.

All men are brothers, but some are finer clay.
—*Plato*

CHAPTER I

THE ISLAND

THE island was a small, insignificant dot in the great waste of blue Pacific lying well to the west and north of the Marshalls. It was between three and four miles long and about three-quarters of a mile across at its widest point. It was fundamentally composed of black lava rock, the summit of a great peak rising sheer from the ocean floor; but, save in the abrupt, forbidding wall of the windward coast, the rock showed only as outcropping in the wind-swept places, through deep deposits of guano.

Seen from a short distance at sea it appeared blurred and shifting of outline from the wheeling hosts of birds. Along the lee shore for nearly its entire length ran a narrow barrier reef, partially exposed at low tide, which enclosed, near its center, a small harbor which was neither bay nor lagoon, but a mere opening fed by fresh-water springs where the coral would not build.

Here the land had a pleasanter aspect. The shore was lined with a belt of beach-grass; there were a few score of coconut and pandanus palms, and farther inland the small valley was choked with hau and kou trees, while ferns, ti-plants and creepers grew in profusion. Near the shore was a large *lanai* of very simple construction. Its floor was canvas laid on the sand, and a series of poles supported a roof of palm-leaves lightly bound together. Close by were several tents and huts made of leaves and braided fiber over flimsy framework. A surf-boat lay high up on the beach under an open shed thatched in the same manner. An eighth of a mile away an acre or so of beach was given over to rotting out shell, and the poisonous, festering mass smelled to high heaven.

Day and night, unabated by rain or wind, the awful odor hung like a pall—ubiquitous, intolerable—dominating even the snuffy, pungent ammonia smell of the guano. At night the mass emitted a pale, shimmering phosphorescence; by day, under the hot sun, the air above it shuddered in phantasmagoric waves.

Tom Matthews rolled over on his bed of mats in one of the tents and sat up. Hours before he had aroused from a coma that in no way resembled refreshing sleep, and had since lain awake cursing the abominable odor and nursing his throbbing temples. He had been drunk the night before, but that was only part of the daily routine and did not account for his unrest. A "square-face" of gin stood within reach of his hand and he gulped down a swallow from the bottle, then rose wearily and slipped his bare feet into straw sandals.

It was gray dawn. The trade-wind had not yet risen, and the sea rolled lazily at the edge of the barrier reef. No one was stirring on the beach, but as he passed Effingham's shack he could hear a hollow, racking cough from within. Effingham was the youngest of the white men and the only one carelessly, consistently cheerful, but his frail physique had succumbed to the loose life of the beach, and soon they would bury him among the sea-birds.

Matthews made a detour past the rotting

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shell-fish and some distance farther on turned inland across a low plateau. There were birds in countless legions. Their crude nests cumbered the ground. They filled the air and dotted the surface of the sea. Huge albatross, fierce-eyed and scornful, lumbered grudgingly out of his way. Somber frigate-birds, with crimson pouches at their throats, hissed and snapped at him truculently, while clouds of gulls and smaller birds took protesting flight to settle again as he passed.

He reached the windward side of the island and threw himself at full length on a rocky eminence overlooking the sea. He was sick to the soul of the squalor and loneliness. Each succeeding day found it harder to endure, and each night found him wakeful in the small hours, tossing about in an agony of self-pity and brooding bitterness.

LIFE had gone hard with him of late years, but he had never felt its hardness so keenly as during the months on this desolate, wind-swept island. He had never become reconciled to the meretricious sham of the beaches. He was a beach-comber, a loafer and an outcast, but not a complacent one. He was going to re-establish his manhood some day. He had told himself so a thousand times as he lay on this same eminence looking out over the sea. He was young and there was still a chance. All things were possible if a man would quit drinking and take a grip on himself.

At present the nightly carousals were a loathsome necessity as a mental diversion and a relief from chronic neurasthenia. Also his companions, with the exception of Effingham, were insufferable and there was no way of keeping up even a pretense of comradeship without "square-face" and card-games to clear the air of the hatefulness and quarrels always smoldering near the surface.

There were five other white men on the island. Cox and Davison were remittance-men. Welsh, the orange-haired giant, was an Australian bushranger who had served time at Port Jackson. Douchet, the Frenchman, was an anarchist, escaped from New Caledonia. These four were incompetents—incapables, typical riffraff of the beach. Effingham, the frail, hawk-nosed young Englishman, retained the unmistakable flavor of gentility and, beneath an utter recklessness, a spark of real worth; but a certain half-mocking irony, habitual with him, made him unapproachable.

There had come to be in the enforced association of these men an actual pathos that bordered on tragedy. They were like men doomed to an arctic Winter in the confines of a vessel. In each man's breast there lurked an intolerance of his fellows. They magnified one another's faults and their own petty grievances, and seldom spoke to each other during the early hours of the day. It was only after sweating at the guano-beds and mellowed by successive drinks that they warmed toward each other.

At night the four incapables squabbled incessantly over the card-games, and Tom, in exasperation, would have often succumbed himself to this absurd and childish petulance had it not been for the inscrutable, smiling face of Effingham. He could not bear to depreciate himself under the mocking gaze of those eyes, alight with understanding and appraisal.

Effingham drank as much as the rest, but it had very little effect on him. No amount of liquor could break down the reticence behind his careless, ironical manner. He remained aloof from all the squabbles, indifferent to the affairs of the others, and though the stamp of death was on him, would have railed at any spoken sympathy. Tom had made many efforts to break down his reserve, but Effingham's manner always left him in doubt as to how far he had succeeded.

CHAPTER II

THE DRIFT OF THE TIDE

FOUR years before, while on a visit to California, Tom Matthews had made one of a yachting party that started merrily and irresponsibly from San Francisco for a cruise through the South Seas. At Sydney, Tom was to take a steamer home. He had written the Girl back east about it, and they were to be married at the end of the voyage. But the yachting party was composed of harebrained spirits who devoted their energies to draw poker and strong drink. At Honolulu their stay was only an elaboration of the rioting aboard, and even the easy morality of the beaches farther south was

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shocked by the conduct of these wild young men.

That sort of thing is naturally bad for discipline aboard a yacht and had its effect on the officers and crew. The result was that the yacht was wrecked among the Herveys with the loss of several lives, nearly every soul aboard being drunk at the time. Tom finally got to Honolulu, where he wrote to the Girl, telling what had happened and saying that he was going home immediately.

But bad news has a way of traveling fast, and certain things had appeared in the papers about the yachting party and its ways at Honolulu, and in time there came a letter from the Girl, the burden of which was that she would never marry an irresponsible boy without one of the redeeming virtues of manhood, and a drunkard to boot. It was a very scathing letter, and effectually put an end to Tom's hopes; and he loved the Girl very much.

The worst of it was that Tom was in no way to blame for the yacht's disastrous trip. He had been disgusted with the state of affairs aboard, tried to keep a clear head, remonstrated with his companions, and, as is usual in such cases, had brought dislike and partial ostracism on himself in consequence. An attempt to explain this to the Girl would have had the appearance of an effort to whitewash himself at the expense of his companions, two of whom had perished in the wreck, and would have done no good.

Having considerable money, Tom had plunged despairingly into a course of wildness that rivaled that of the late yachting party. This lasted for some time. When his money was nearly gone he sent for more, only to find that through certain intricate speculations of his trustees there was no more to be had.

He then decided that there was nothing left for him at home, and with the remnant of his funds took passage on a schooner bound for the South Seas. At first he made an effort to keep straight and do something worth while, and took up such small employments as he could find; but a man without money is as badly off among the islands as a man without money anywhere else, except that going to the dogs is a great deal easier where the conventionalities are less finely drawn and one has plenty of company. Tom worried a good deal over the way the Girl had treated him, and little by little he began to lose hold.

His career differed in no way from that of many others who have been cast upon the beaches. He found that his self-respect, which he had always cherished as above price, was no great asset, after all. He learned to sponge for drinks as shamelessly as the oldest blue-nosed bummer on the beach and to take pot-luck with the natives, when nothing better served, without a qualm. He was not depraved or besotted. It was simply a matter of necessity on finding himself, for the first time in his life, in need of the wherewithal to keep body and soul together.

He made friends where he found them, chiefly among remittance-men or men with shady pasts. He had nothing to look forward to and nothing particularly creditable to look back upon, but it is probable that he retained more of the rags of his self-respect than he knew. He despised the "squaw-men" of the beaches, fatuously content with their families of half-caste children, and the simple traders hoarding away dollars against days of ease "back home." He earned a dollar where he could, and promptly spent it among his chosen friends.

Occasionally there were windfalls, and such, apparently, had been the circumstance that led to his present situation. A certain island had been annexed and chartered by Great Britain, and two rival companies had applied for a charter to work the guano-beds. There had been a long and tedious delay in the granting of the charter, and one of the companies decided to take time by the forelock, charter or none, and privately sent one of its schooners with men and materials to work the beds.

It was piracy, pure and simple. A cruiser or gunboat happening in at any time would have made it very warm indeed for the men engaged in the work, but the island was unimportant and, being nominally uninhabited, exempt from Government patrol. Tom, by a turn of the wheel of Chance, had been drawn into the venture together with the other five white men and five Kanakas now on the island.

The shell-bed was a recent discovery of their own which they had no intention of sharing with the company. Whatever pearls were found they would divide among themselves, and Tom had no quarrel with

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the ethics of the case. It was the finding of the pearl-shell that had led him to the making of new resolutions.

His present life filled him with disgust. He longed for cut glass, silver, fine linen and throngs of well-dressed men and women, and to be in touch with his kind on a basis of equality. He had brooded too long over a woman who had thrown him over without giving him a fair chance. He would never forget her—her memory would always be a scar—but he could pull himself together and make a fresh start.

What lay hidden in the corruption of the pearl-shell was at present problematical. Divided among six, with a share for the Kanakas, it might mean much or a mere trifle. At least his share would be a nest-egg to be put to some use. His companions, he knew, would use theirs in carousals at the first port they drifted to, but he was done for good with this side of life.

Many thousand similar resolutions have been breathed to the stars of the tropic night or the crooning surf by men on island beaches writhing in an anguish of self-pity and remorse, to be forgotten with the first fair wind of to-morrow.

CHAPTER III

VISIONS

AS TOM lay on his back staring at the sky and musing over these things, he felt little of the joy of anticipation. On the following day they would clean the shell. Excitement and impatience had keyed his nerves to a high tension, but he felt a vague uneasiness like a foreboding of evil. He mentally reviewed the individual traits of his companions, their strained attitude toward one another and the smoldering hostility and distrust that had grown through being so long cooped up together in this lonely place.

There had already been several preliminary wrangles over the division of the pearls. Four of the men were either actual or potential criminals, and Tom was none too sure that he himself did not belong in the latter class. Effingham was an unfathomable enigma, and although Tom trusted him instinctively, he actually knew nothing of the working of the active mind behind those inscrutable eyes. Altogether he could not shake off the feeling that the near future held something sinister in store.

The Kanakas were a problem in themselves. To avoid complications in allotting shares they had promised the boys a hundred dollars apiece, to be paid when Captain Wiggins returned—a highly satisfactory arrangement so far as the boys were concerned; but they had done most of the work of diving and shared in the general excitement, and it seemed inevitable that they would talk with Wiggins's crew, and news of the pearls being spread thus, there was no doubt that Wiggins, who was the hard-fisted type of "lime-juice" Captain, would take the pearls and laugh in their faces.

Oppressed with uneasiness, his head still aching, Tom walked slowly back across the island. He felt that his nerves required a stimulant, and though he was full of resolutions for the future, the present still had to take care of itself. A few drinks would fortify him against the long wait for the morrow.

No one was at work on the guano-beds. The Kanakas were off fishing on the reef, and the white men were sitting about on the beach or wandering uneasily around the vicinity of the pearl-shell. It was agreed that no one should tamper with the shell until the proper time, but the temptation to probe at the oysters, fast growing leathery and shriveled in the sun, was almost irresistible. The square-face passed freely from hand to hand. Even Welsh, the stolid giant, was visibly affected with the spirit of uneasiness.

"My word!" said he, wiping his mouth with a huge paw, "I wish that stinkin' mess was cleaned up. Suppose a ship should 'appen in now with all that shell laid out. It would be cruel 'ard to be stuck up for all that swag, mates."

Effingham winked at Tom.

"Listen to the lion roar!" said he. "Reddy the Bushranger afraid of being held up! How about you, Frenchy?"

The Frenchman looked at the shell and ground his teeth wickedly.

"*Sacrê!*" said he; "suppose she come now for dose pearls, I would cut the 'eart from every man on the sheep!"

"Spoken like a little man," said Effingham. "No lack of spirit in Frenchy here. I should like to see a man's heart cut out. It must be curious."

"There's no need to borrow trouble," said Tom. "We haven't seen a sail in

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three months and there's none coming. We're too far off the track."

"Don't be too sure, my son," said Effingham. "Things usually happen at the wrong time. Pearls, especially looted ones, smell of trouble as sure as they smell of rotten oysters. Pass the gin, Tommie."

Davison yawned loudly.

"Here comes Keola with a bag of mullet," said he, "and Joey's got some crawfish. Good chuck in sight, boys. Let's have a little game to work up an appetite."

They gathered in the *lanai*, a curious company, their methods of play distinct and characteristic. Cox was thin and wiry, with a nose of reddish-purple hue and a perpetual, foolish smile under one corner of his mustache that gave him at once an air of rakishness and weakness. He was an irresponsible creature, cranky and querulous, despite his fatuous smile, the first to be affected by drink and the most cautious and timid player.

Davison was a stout, baldish man of middle age, with a baritone voice whose mellow, bell-like sweetness had survived all the ravages of dissipation. He had an ultra-British manner, was insufferably talkative and alternately sang old English ballads or snatches of half-forgotten church music, and babbled the most shockingly indecent stories till he lapsed into mere maudlin garrulity.

Welsh played blunderingly, with strong oaths when luck went against him. Douchet, throughout the game, sat tense and nervous, plucking at his pointed black beard, his mean little close-set eyes alight with cupidity. He snatched at his winnings greedily, and it was understood that he would cheat when possible.

Effingham, the best card-player of them all, played carelessly, unruffled by winnings or losses, his slim, finely modeled fingers manipulating the cards with the skill of a born gambler.

Tom played the fair, average game that most Americans play when the game is draw poker, but it had long ceased to interest him and at times filled him with a neurasthenic antipathy almost maddening. His gorge rose at the greed of Welsh and Douchet over trifles, the babbled obscenities of Davison and Cox's eternal grin, yet he continued to play, for it was the only relief from mental stagnation.

THE game lacked intrinsic interest because there was nothing to play for. They had staked their prospective shares in the guano enterprise against one another so often, borrowing and re-borrowing, that it had grown into a hopeless jumble of accounts, and no one attempted to straighten it out. They now played merely for chips made of the limbs of trees of different-colored woods sawed into thin disks. These had a purely chimerical value of twenty-five cents, fifty cents and a dollar each, according to color, the values being represented by sandalwood, hau and kou woods, respectively.

They played till mealtime, but the game had less interest than usual, though it seemed to Tom that there was more of the spirit of fellowship than there had been since their first days on the island. Every man was in good humor and for the time they warmed toward one another, forgot their selfish bickerings and expanded into something like geniality. They were, in fact, building air-castles with foundations of pearls.

After the meal they renewed the game by the light of smoky lanterns, but presently Welsh threw down his hand.

"Blow the cards!" said he; "let's chuck it. We've a bigger gamble out there on the beach than we'll ever get out of these greasy old palammers. Me mind ain't on 'em. It's on a pub in Sydney, where the fighters drop in now and then. I've a fancy to buy it and tryne fighters meself and be genteel with a top-'at. I've always wanted to own a pub."

"I'm for the Poodle Dog in San Francisco," said Tom. "I'm going to order a canvas-back with the sauce made from the juice of the carcass; a planked venison steak, some artichokes, a ripe old Camembert and a bottle of their special Burgundy. After that I don't care whether school keeps or not."

Cox was for going into trade. He knew of a fine schooner, seized for debt, that was fairly rotting at the dock in Auckland, and could be bought dirt-cheap. Davison was going "home" with the sole idea of disgracing the father who had turned him off with a pittance to shift for himself in the Colonies. First, however, he was going to have a bit of a turn-up with some old cronies at Joe Anderson's at Suva.

"Me, I go to Rouen," said Douchet.

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"Da's de place where I am betr-r-ray' and sent to Noumea, de private hell of de French Gover'ment. I been in dat hell t'ree years. I find dat woman who betr-ray' me and send me dere, if she is live. She is my wife. With dese two 'ands I keel her then. I tak her by de t'roat, so, and I keel her!"

Effingham laughed.

"You fellows talk like a lot of bloated millionaires," said he, "when, for all you know, there's about twenty dollars' worth of crooked little pearls out there to buy pubs and schooners with. There may be no more than one of Tommie's square meals all round. Go ahead with your fairy-tales; I'm going to turn in." And he rolled over in the corner and went to sleep.

None of the others slept, however. Talk languished, they took frequent nips at the bottle and the air was heavy with tobacco-smoke. Sometimes a man drowsed, particularly the corpulent Davison, only to start awake with a jerk.

Tom felt unusually wakeful himself, but he could not understand these men deliberately fighting sleep, until he gradually became aware of a slyness and stealthiness in the way they were eying and appraising one another. Then he understood. The germs of distrust he had feared had already taken root.

"Why," he muttered, "the beasts are each afraid the others are going to get the best of him."

He rose in disgust and went to his tent to sleep till morning.

CHAPTER IV

THE KEEPER OF THE PEARLS

"MY EYE!" said Welsh, in an awe-struck voice; "wot a 'aul! Mates, I don't know 'ow you feel about it, but *I'm* going to get drunk!"

Douchet's nostrils were wide and his eyes like two live coals.

"*Pardieu!*" he cried; "we are r-reech!"

Cox's smile grew more lickerish than ever, and Davison stared incredulously, repeating, "My word! My word!" over and over again, while the Kanaka boys hovered about the outskirts of the group, wide-eyed and curious.

The pearls lay before them in a brown calabash, a heap of beautiful gems, far finer than they had dared anticipate. The uncertainty of the pearl-fisher's trade makes it one of the most fascinating in the world, for while an entire bed may yield nothing more valuable than the shell, every oyster may hold a potential fortune.

None of the party was an expert in the delicate business of judging pearl values, but the size and beauty of some of these spoke eloquently for themselves. There were four, indeed, of a bigness and luster beyond any they had ever seen. But there were many others, for the bed had proved of almost incredible richness, and they ranged in a graduated scale down to a scant handful of irregular baroques.

Tom gazed with fascination at the softly glowing heap in the calabash. His chance for rehabilitation lay before him, and the blood surged faster through his pulses. The past seemed to fall away from and the future to rise and welcome him, so that his dominant feeling was a longing for action of some kind to try out his dormant muscles and stir the kinks out of his brain. Psychologically it was the same sensation that prompted Welsh's desire to get drunk.

Effingham fingered the gems coolly enough, but his eyes had an unwonted brightness and there was a glowing, hectic spot on each cheek.

"Emblems of trouble," said he irrelevantly. "If we weren't such a mild-mannered, gentle flock of lambs, there might be some throat-cutting over these. Now that we've got 'em and the suspense is over, what are we going to do with 'em?"

"W'y, divide 'em," said Welsh; "each man his share, and share and share alike. That's right and proper among gentlemen, I take it."

"How do you propose to do it? Who's going to set a value on them? We're none of us pearl-buyers and some one's bound to get the worst of it, let alone coming to blows over the division. Hadn't we better talk it over?"

"Oh, rot!" said Cox; "we're all gentlemen here. Why not bury 'em till Wiggins comes back?"

Effingham looked at him with a sudden, contemptuous fierceness.

"There's no need of any delusions about our all being gentlemen and men of honor. The fact is we're a crew of pretty hard characters. If we bury these, every one will have to know where. Then what's to

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hinder any one of us privately digging them up and planting them somewhere else? No, there's only one thing to be done. Let the one man who holds the balance of trust take charge of them till they can be disposed of and a fair division made of the money. Otherwise there's going to be a lot of dissension, and that means—trouble."

"Good idea, that," said Davison; "we'll draw cuts for it."

"That won't do, boys," said Effingham mildly, almost pleadingly; "I said the man who holds the balance of trust. We can't leave that to chance. We must vote for it."

After some discussion this was agreed upon. They wrote their votes on the margin of a leaf from an old paper novel and tossed them into the calabash, but the result of the first ballot was ludicrous. Tom and Effingham had each voted for the other, the rest had all voted for themselves. Tom laughed in spite of the gravity of the situation.

"Vote's a tie," said he; "come again, gentlemen."

"One moment," said Effingham, "don't think I want to do all of the talking, but I do want one word before we vote again. Of course we're all good friends here and can settle this easily, but the idea is to keep the pearls safe together with no jawing and rowing about it. The only way is to have the most capable man in charge. He has got to keep a clear head and be ready to fight some discontented idiot at any time to protect his trust. Any one of us can put up a fight, I guess, and any one of us can let the gin alone," he looked hard at Cox and Davison, "but my candidate is Tom Matthews, because he can do both as well as any of us, and being a sort of new chum on the beach, is probably a little more trustworthy than the rest of us. That's all."

THIS time there were two votes for Tom against one for every one but Cox. The irresolute and timid member had dodged the responsibility in favor of Tom. There was a snarl from Douchet and a curse from Welsh as the result was announced and Cox cringed a trifle, looking a little dubious as though he half regretted his act. But there was no further demonstration, though as Tom made the pearls into a temporary packet he was watched hungrily by several pairs of eyes and a little thrill ran up and down his spine.

He had anticipated trouble and it now appeared that he was to be the storm-center, but the sense of responsibility fired him with a new self-confidence and determination. It was, he felt, the first move in his rehabilitation, and he at once set one of the Kanaka boys to the task of making an oilskin pouch for the pearls.

Effingham, who appeared quite ill, had a severe coughing spell and wandered away. The rest, apparently resolved to accept the situation with good grace, started a game of cards, and Tom took a hand and played for an hour or so. Then he noticed that the drinks were circulating freely and his companions were deliberately setting about the business of getting drunk. They grew boisterous, telling of what they were going to do with their wealth and boasting of shocking episodes and debaucheries of the past.

Tom noticed, however, that none of the conversation was directed at him, and when he spoke they all listened silently till he had done, as though there had grown a wall of formality between them. When the oilskin pouch was done he left them at their game and went in search of Effingham.

CHAPTER V

"THERE WAS ONCE A MAN I KNEW."

HE FOUND him in a little clearing close to where a small spring bubbled up among the stones. Inland the low trees shut out the nesting birds and the barren bleakness of the rest of the island, while seaward the dwarf mimosa hid the beach, and the nearest view of the sea was the surf breaking on the distant margin of the reef, seen through the swaying trunks of the palms. It was a favorite spot of Effingham's when he wished to be alone after a spell of illness.

He was mending a tear in the knee of a pair of duck trousers by drawing and inserting threads. He had a scrupulous neatness and refinement of person and an almost miraculous dexterity in the use of his long, slim hands. He could do interesting and mysterious things with cards, coins and bits of string, make perfect splices with rope and bring down a drinking coconut by throwing a sharp stone or with a single shot from his revolver. When he finished the delicate darning he was employed with, it could not be told from the original fabric. He was

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whistling through his teeth as unconcernedly as though pearls were the last thing in the world.

Tom threw himself down beside him.

"Walt," said he, "you were right about these —— things. I smell trouble."

Effingham took a tiny pair of scissors from the bag by his side, delicately snipped the cloth on his knee and pulled the thread.

"Shouldn't wonder," said he; "I suppose the jailbirds are a little unwholesome by now."

They could hear laughter and hoarse snatches of song from the beach, and presently there rose above the other sounds a clear, strong, bell-like voice:

"Eternal Father! strong to save,
Whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep;
Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee
For those in peril on the sea!"

Heard from a distance with the fat, sodden face of the singer hidden, the stately hymn sounded dignified and really beautiful. Then Davison's voice trailed off into "Tom Bowling" and finally to some obscene verses of the Siva dance, at which there was a patting of hands keeping time and more laughter.

"The voice of an angel and the soul of a swine," said Effingham. "We're a pretty hard lot, Tommie. How do you feel about holding office as treasurer?"

"Shaky," said Tom. "The beasts are dissatisfied and there's bound to be a ruction sooner or later. I believe the safest way is to bury the things."

"Don't do it. They're going to want to see them every hour or so to make sure you have them safe and to finger them over. I wouldn't bury them if I were you."

Tom plucked viciously at a tuft of grass and flung it from him with a curse.

"By gracious, it makes me sick! Here we're all ready to fly at each other's throats over a lot of baubles from sick oysters. —— the brutes! What did you saddle this on to me for, anyway, Walt?"

Effingham laid aside the completed garment, lazily rolled a cigarette and threw himself back at full length.

"Don't be an ass, Tommie! There are a dozen reasons. I'll give you just a few. For one thing, you're head and shoulders above the rest of the gang; that's understood. If there had been any attempt at a division made, we'd have begun murdering each other at once for the other man's share. If either Welsh or Frenchy had charge, you'd never see one of those pearls again, and either one of them would cut the throat of Cox or Davison if *they* had them, without turning a hair."

"I'd have taken them in charge myself, but there are times when I'm pretty helpless—coughs and hemorrhages, you know—and couldn't put up any kind of a scrap, when, as it is, I'm standing back of you in any trouble that comes along. And now, Tommie, another thing: I take it that your share in these pearls means a whole lot to you—more than a splurge at Honolulu or San Francisco and then knocking around this God-forsaken part of the universe the rest of your life?"

"Of course. I mean to get square with myself if I can. I owe it to myself, and this may be a start in the right direction."

"I know, I know. And there's usually some reason why a decent white man 'hits the beach' in the first place. Sometimes it's booze, and then again it isn't. Suppose you tell me about it. You see, Tommie," he continued, dreamily gazing off into space, "the signs are up for me. I've no interest in the pearls themselves, for not one of them will ever be a particle of use to me."

Tom felt a warm wave of sympathy.

"Don't! Don't say that, old chap——"

Effingham waved his cigarette lightly.

"It's all set for the curtain; no use talking about it," said he. "Go on, Tommie, if you care to."

IT WAS the first time he had ever put aside his careless, half-mocking air to either give or ask a confidence. He was looking up at the sky with his usual impersonal expression, but Tom saw that there was a touch of melancholy in the thin, sallow face, and something welled up within him. It was a new respect and liking; a feeling of brotherhood for the doomed man, and with it, too, a longing for the confidence and support of the latent spiritual strength in the frail body.

He did not understand Effingham and the psychic quality of his almost uncanny intuition and unerring judgment, nor could he comprehend the dauntless spirit in the wasting body, that would condescend to no

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weakness nor brook any man's sympathy. He did, however, appreciate the tragic pathos of Effingham's condition, and of his inevitable fate's being worked out on this desolate island. He told without reserve of the Girl, the disastrous cruise and his plans and resolutions.

Effingham listened thoughtfully, smoking an endless chain of cigarettes.

"Why don't you go to her when you've got straightened out and tell her the truth about it?" he asked when Tom had finished.

"Why should I?" said Tom bitterly. "She never gave me a show in the first place, and she wouldn't believe me. No, that's over and done with, Walt. I've got to make a fresh start, live down this four years of rotten worthlessness, and in time I'll forget the whole business."

"You're a pretty good fellow, Tommie, if I do say it to your face. Get the rum out of you and some decent clothes and decent people round you and you'll be a better; and remember one thing—the only thing a woman worth while won't tolerate in a man is weakness. Give me a light!"

He lit a fresh cigarette.

"It's been good of you to tell me all this, and I'll tell you a yarn to explain what I mean. It will take but a few minutes. There was once a man I knew who came from pretty good stock—his father was a peer of England—and he was trained in most of the accomplishments that go to make up what we call a gentleman. Among a great many others he had one serious fault—he was rather frail of physique.

"As he had something more than ordinary dexterity in various ways and a fairly well-ordered brain, this did not occur to him as a fault till a certain period in his life. He was a younger son, this man, very wild and a spendthrift, quite unlike his stolid, beefy older brothers, and in the natural course of events he finally found himself in Shanghai drawing a quarterly remittance from home.

"He was, I will not say superior to, but different from the thousands of his kind who loaf about the clubs and saloons, and in a few years he was making a great deal of money, and was, besides, something of a social factor and a man of importance; and then he married. She was the daughter of an English army officer and a member of the gayer social set, and it is likely that he dazzled her at first when they were married, for she was an admirer of the rugged, athletic type of man, and this frail chap would not ordinarily have appealed to her. As for him, it is enough to say that he worshiped her and was blind to a number of faults and indiscretions.

"Well, to cut it short, a yacht came into port. The Captain and owner was a great, handsome brute of a creature, full of masculine magnetism, and about as thoroughpaced a scoundrel as ever walked a deck. His record became public afterward. He entertained lavishly aboard and there were always card-games and women in evidence. The fellow became a kind of fad, and the man I'm telling about often called aboard with his wife.

"One night he was one of a party selected for the cheap form of swindle by which the yachtsman lived, and after the drinks had circulated freely, a round of cold hands was dealt for the purpose of fleecing the guests. The frail man knew all about manipulating cards, detected the thing at once and exposed it on the spot. Now there are two important things that belong with the story. One is that the man had developed something the matter with his lungs and was more frail than ever, and the other that his wife had often been aboard the yacht as a guest of the women.

"There was an uproar in the yacht's cabin. The yachtsman owned to the attempted swindle, but he proceeded to beat the frail man, who had no weapons fit to defend himself with, to within an inch of his life, so that he was carried ashore insensible. The next morning the yacht was gone and the man's wife with it! That's all. It's a pretty sordid story."

Effingham sat up and threw away his cigarette-stub. He had told the story without a trace of emotion.

"Br-r-rgh! I'm as shaky as a leaf. If I don't take a few drinks I shall have a coughing fit."

"But what did you—what did the man do?" asked Tom.

"Nothing much. Things dropped away from him, so to speak. He hunted the other man for a couple of years over a deal of blue water and dry land till his business went to pot and his money was gone. Now, Tommie, to change the subject, this election as treasurer isn't going to stand. They won't have it, and I only put it forward to gain time till something better turned up,

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so we can look for that trouble you've been anticipating right soon. Hello, I shouldn't wonder if this is it!"

CHAPTER VI

DISSATISFACTION

A LITTLE group was approaching, led by Welsh and Douchet. Behind them came the two remittance-men, their arms lovingly twined about each other's necks. In one hand Cox brandished a half-emptied gin bottle. Douchet's small, white teeth were bared in a coyote-like snarl. Welsh's eyes were bloodshot and his face flushed. He beamed boozily upon Tom and Effingham with an expansive grin that was meant to appear affable, but there was a furtive, self-conscious air about him that was perfectly transparent.

"Mate," said he to Tom as they seated themselves, "we've 'ad a bit of a cornference about those votes a while ago and wants to talk it over. No 'ard feelin's, o' course. Suppose we all 'as a drink first."

Cox passed the bottle round and it was soon emptied.

"Well," said Tom, outwardly calm, "what is it?"

"W'y," said Welsh, licking his lips, "it seems like a bit too much to arsk of one man to tyke charge of all them pearls. Too much responsibility, like."

"Yas," said Douchet, "dose pearls don' belong one man. Dey belong us all. I like mine in my 'ands so I can feel 'em de 'ole tam. Da's me!"

"'Old on, Frenchy," said Welsh, "none o' your cuttin' in. You see, Matthews," he continued, argumentatively, "it's 'ell to sit tight 'ere till Wiggins comes, with nothin' to do but shovel guano into bags when we all 'ave money, as good as in the bank. We fidges and fusses and no one 'arf satisfied 'less it's you that 'as the swag. W'y not 'ave a bit o' fun to parse the time? ''Ow?' says you. W'y, divvy up the pearls. We don't care if there is a mistyke of a few pounds in the long run. We'll leave the division to you, so being you're treasurer, if you like, and no questions arsked. Then we can 'ave a turn-up with the cards that'll liven things up on this Gawd-forsaken roost."

Tom looked from face to face of the group and saw no sympathy. All were looking at him expectantly, waiting in suspense for his reply.

"There's no earthly use my telling you you're a pack of fools," said he. "Suppose that I refuse to give them up?"

Welsh looked everywhere but at the speaker, as though embarrassed.

"W'y," said he softly, "then there'll be just that many more for the rest of us."

Tom grew red to the ears, then a cold rage came over him. He rose to his feet. When he spoke, his voice was low and even.

"You blackguard! You bushranging thief! You dare threaten me? Get up on your feet; I'm going to fight you!"

Welsh looked up, an expression of almost ludicrous astonishment on his face, then got slowly to his feet. He was a formidable creature. His low, sloping forehead was muscled over the heavy red brows like the Farnese Hercules, and his great shoulder muscles peaked up to his ears. He towered over Tom a good five inches and outweighed him by seventy-five pounds. He stood for a moment flexing his huge biceps, facing Tom, the look of wonder deepening on his face.

"I say, Tommie," broke in Davison, "cut it, old chap. It's a fair sportin' proposition to gamble for the bally things. I've more than half agreed with Reddy, and so has Cox here. It ain't as if we couldn't trust you. We want the fun. Let's be friends and quit ragging."

Effingham had been lying on his back, smiling and unmoved.

"Tommie," said he, "you're outnumbered, old man. It isn't so almighty unfair for the majority to ask a reconsideration under the circumstances. Now, I'm in favor of a little excitement myself, so we're five to one against you. *Come* on now, hand over the loot!"

Tom raged inwardly and his eyes still blazed at Welsh. Physically he had no chance with the giant, but he was angry enough to have fought a mad bull. He groped in the breast of his pajamas, tore the pouch from the strand of fiber that held it round his neck and tossed it on the ground.

"Have it your own way,——the lot of you!" said he savagely. "There'll be some scores to settle over this yet, and don't you forget it!"

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CHAPTER VII

POKER FOR PEARLS

THE pearls constituting the "bank" were sorted out and placed in several small calabashes, each supposed to hold gems of different value. The small, irregular pearls in one calabash were rated at twenty-five cents, the next grade at half a dollar, and so on in progression. The four finer gems had a calabash to themselves and ranked at fifty dollars apiece. The values were purely fictitious, of course, and assumed for the sake of simplicity in cashing in the chips, but the arrangement was as fair as possible.

It took some pains to arrive at all this, but in the end all were satisfied and the wooden chips were carefully counted out and divided equally among the sextette. The assumed value of the chips was made to tally exactly with the assumed value of the pearls, and the few chips they had left over were carefully destroyed at Effingham's suggestion.

Effingham took the four large pearls in the hollow of his hand and studied them with interest. Three of them were of the soft, smoky gray, of the kind known as black pearls; the fourth was a delicate shade of pink. "Beautiful, useless things," said he musingly; "curious, isn't it, that most fine gems have blood on them? These four, now! Who knows what deviltry they'll stir up before some fool buys them for a woman's neck? I think I'll win these four myself. Gentlemen, bid these beauties good-by!"

"Your deal, Matthews," said Welsh, as Tom cut a deuce.

Inwardly Tom shared to the full the suppressed excitement as he dealt the cards. The game of draw-poker had taken a new importance, as momentous as life itself. He felt that every hand would be a crisis, and he was never to forget that game nor any detail of its properties.

With the exception of Effingham, who always in some mysterious manner managed to clothe himself in white duck trousers, sandals and a clean shirt, they were all clad in pajamas, soiled and ragged and stained, every man in his bare feet, and all of them weather-beaten and hard of feature. Behind them squatted the Kanakas, born gamblers at heart, fascinated by the tense game and criticizing each play in whispers.

The *lanai* was well sheltered by mimosa on one side and a windbreak of canvas on the other, but there was a stir in the air and the windbreak bellied and swayed while the leaves of the flimsy roof rustled and slatted loose in the heavy gusts. The birds had finished nesting and bustled about uneasily, ready for their long flight northward. Some of them even invaded the *lanai* and waddled impudently about, peering curiously at the group and quite unafraid. The wind had hauled to the south and the sun set coldly in a sea of pale yellow. The palms creaked protestingly, and little vortexes of sand went spinning along the beach. The surf broke heavily on the reef, and the air was laden with the portent of a Kona storm.

Douchet won the first pot. He played most card-games well, but his Gallic temperament interfered with his proficiency at poker. He scooped in the chips greedily.

"Bad luck, Frenchy," said Cox. "You'll catch it later on."

"You watch me," said Douchet, "and play your 'and the bes' you know how. Maybe you catch somesing yourself."

They played with varying luck for many hours. At nightfall the Kanakas brought the lanterns and the game went on uninterrupted. No one thought of food. With the pearls before their eyes every man played for all he knew how, and the tense excitement of that game lasted from beginning to end. There were no songs and very little conversation except such as belonged to the game. They were sparing of drinks at first, but toward morning their last case of gin was broached and a bottle placed beside each man.

When any one laughed, it was high-pitched and nervous, and there were several sharp arguments over various plays, but there was no serious dispute until toward morning, when Effingham, having won a considerable sum, counted out fifty dollars' worth of chips, put these in the calabash and took out a black pearl, which he laid beside his other chips.

"'Ere," said Welsh, "that'll never do! No cashin' in till the game's over."

"And why not?"

"Because, wot 'ave we got these counters for? We'll 'ave the 'ole bally thing in a mess first thing we know."

"I've played some poker, but I never

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heard of a rule to prevent a man cashing in all or part of his winnings at any time during the game. I'm playing for those four pearls, Reddy, if I can get them, but you've got more than enough chips there yourself. Why not take one, too?"

It was a bluff on Effingham's part, but it sufficed. Welsh actually did exchange fifty dollars' worth of chips for a pearl. Then, a short time later, Effingham having Welsh's hand against him, the others having dropped out, deliberately tossed his pearl into the pot for a fifty-dollar raise. Welsh was obliged to meet it with his own pearl in order to call, and Effingham took the pot.

There was a lengthy argument at this, the contention being that it took too many chips out of circulation. Effingham settled it by calmly putting back the pearls and taking the chips.

"I only wanted to establish a precedent," said he. "It is now understood that we play for chips only. At the same time, I won those two pearls fairly, and I consider that they belong to me. I claim the privilege of exchanging chips for them when I cash in, if I'm fortunate enough to have them."

MAT DAWN they were still playing. The boys now brought them food, which they ate mechanically, without stopping the game. Toward noon Davison went broke. The long hours and the strain told on his gross body, and his was no match for the clearer heads of the others. He was, in fact, stupidly drowsy when he played away his last few chips, and without a word he staggered outside, threw himself on the sand and was instantly fast asleep.

Cox lost his last chip at about five in the afternoon. He sat for a while as though dazed, plucking at his lower lip and gazing wistfully at the pearls yet, strangely enough, with the same fatuous smile under his tawny, sunburned mustache. Then he, too, went sound asleep, rolling over where he sat.

At midnight he awoke and sat up, blinking. Then his roving eyes took in the situation and he clapped his hands to his forehead.

"My God!" he cried, and threw himself at full length, his head in his arms, his whole body shaking with hysterical sobbing. Outside, beyond the windbreak, they heard Davison's voice mumbling as though he were only half awake, and then he began to sing, low and haltingly, as though the song came from a half-forgotten past:

"I'm wearing awa', Jean,
Like the snow in a thaw, Jean,
I'm wearing awa'
To the land o' the leal."

It struck Tom like a blow, for the simple Scotch ballad was the favorite song of the Girl at Home, yet he had never heard it sung with the pathos and expression in the drunken beach-comber's voice. He had been playing as greedily and mercilessly as the others, at a high nervous tension, and it lifted him away from the game momentarily like a shock. He looked at the groveling Cox with a sense of shame and pity. What a ghastly business he was about!

He was about to flame out with some hot protest against the game when he caught Effingham's gaze fixed upon him steadily. Effingham was smiling slightly as though he divined his thought, and his eyes shifted meaningly to the others. Douchet was leaning forward, his whole soul centered on the cards in Effingham's hand, waiting for the deal. The snarl on his lips was more wolfish than ever, and the man actually trembled from sheer cupidity. Welsh sat with his huge forearms on his knees, his hands clenched till the knuckles showed white, his heavy jaw shot forward and his little eyes gleaming like twin sparks under the shaggy, overhanging brows.

"It's been a long session," said Effingham. "Want to cash in, anybody?"

"Deal!" said Welsh sharply. "It's freeze-out now. 'Ole 'og or none!"

Effingham rolled and lit a cigarette, then riffled the cards several times with his slim, sensitive fingers, passed them to Tom for the cut, and swiftly dealt them round. Tom was well ahead of the game, Welsh and Douchet had nearly the same amount of chips apiece, and Effingham had neatly piled in front of him counters to the exact amount of two hundred dollars. As Douchet picked up his cards, they all saw the exulting gleam in his eyes.

Nevertheless Welsh shoved a handful of chips into the pot. Tom looked at his hand and counted out the requisite amount to make good. Effingham dropped, and Douchet, with a Gallic whoop of joy, threw in four kou-wood chips. Welsh studied, glow-

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ering, for a while, then, with a deep curse, made good, and Tom did the same. Then Effingham did a curious thing. Taking his discarded hand he deliberately tore it in two and threw the fragments over his shoulder.

"Cards, gentlemen?" said he calmly.

Douchet took one, Welsh two, and Tom, his voice as hoarse as a crow, called for one and picked it up with a hand shaking like a leaf. Instantly Welsh shoved his whole pile forward, picked up his gin-bottle and drank a full half-pint of the raw spirit!

Without waiting for Tom to bet, Douchet, with a laugh that was almost a scream, threw his chips into the pot and reached out, his hands like grapples, ready to scoop them in, his eyes gloating on the calabashes of pearls.

"Hold on, Frenchy; show them down first!" cried Tom, as he counted out chips to close the pot.

"Four queens!" bellowed Welsh.

"Four h'aces!" screamed Douchet. "Beat zat, you —— fools!"

"Gentlemen," said Tom, "I have a small straight flush," and laid down a flush in hearts from the deuce to the six.

FOR a moment there was absolute silence. Then Douchet sprang up, his knife in his hand. But Cox reached out suddenly and caught him by the ankle, effectually tripping him up. Then he rose and stamped on Douchet's fingers till he dropped the knife, and finished by kicking him heartily in the ribs.

"Take that, you damned cur!" he cried, still sobbing hysterically. "Can't you take your medicine like a gentleman?"

Welsh had risen to his knees and clutched at Tom, but Effingham had a heavy black revolver in his hand.

"Drop that, Reddy!" said he sharply. He hastily dumped the pearls together into one calabash. "Here, Tommie, take 'em. Mine too. No time to cash in, now. Joey, you go stop Tomi's house, see no one steal-um. You no sleep. Take care of yourself now, Tommie, I'm—I'm all in!"

He had no sooner spoken than a terrible fit of coughing seized him, a red foam appeared on his lips and he fell over in a dead faint.

Tom caught up the revolver and emptied the pearls into the oil-skin pouch.

"Now," said he, "there's been enough of this foolery. You've had your fun and I hope you're satisfied. Hereafter you let me alone, all of you, and don't try any monkey tricks. I've won these things and I'm going to keep 'em in charge, but you men stand off and don't bother me and I'll play fair. When the time comes, I'll give every one of you a share. Try any more dirty work and you won't get it."

CHAPTER VIII

A MISSILE FROM NOWHERE

EFFINGHAM, like Tom, occupied one of the tents. When Tom had secured the pearls he helped Joey get the sick man to his bunk and sat with him till Effingham recovered from his fainting spell and fell into a normal sleep. Then Tom went to his own tent and lay down. It occurred to him that he ought to find some hiding-place for the pearls at once, but he was too utterly exhausted to move. Just as he was about to lose consciousness, Joey put his head in through the flap of the tent.

"Tomi," said he, "I stop here outside. Maybe bimeby tired I 'fraid I *kiamoe* (sleep). Then I speak Keola; he come."

"All right, Joey," said Tom; "now clear out!" and immediately fell asleep.

He awoke in the pitch-darkness that precedes dawn, his senses tingling and alert. He could see absolutely nothing, but something was moving inside the tent. Something that breathed heavily was stealthily approaching his bunk! He had taken the precaution to keep Effingham's revolver strapped to his wrist by the leather thong, and it fell naturally into his palm as he rose to a sitting posture.

"Is that you, Joey?" he called.

There was no answer. Instinctively Tom clutched at his breast. The pearls were gone and at the instant of discovery he fired in the direction of the sound. By the flash he saw a form rising from its knees and a livid face with a knife in its teeth! Before he could fire again he was grappling with a snarling, rabid creature who sprang at him bodily and clutched his throat. He knew it was Douchet.

The man was quivering with hate and rage, and though Tom was far stronger and heavier, for a moment the Frenchman had him at a disadvantage. He stabbed viciously at Tom with the knife in his right hand,

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and by sheer luck Tom parried the blow with his arm and caught Douchet by the wrist. The Frenchman's teeth sank into his other arm and Tom staggered back, missed his footing and fell backward, carrying the tent down with him.

Both he and Douchet were still struggling, but they were soon involved in the folds of the tent and practically helpless. Tom wriggled and fought with the heavy canvas to free himself, when he felt some one hauling at it from the outside.

Presently he was spun around in the folds, the tent came away clear and he was lying on his back blinking at a light shining in his eyes. Davison stood near, holding a lantern, while Welsh, who had torn away the tent, towered over him, his eyes bloodshot and alight with ferocity. Douchet, who had tumbled sprawling out of the folds, was rising to his feet.

Near by, lying on its back, its arms outspread in the form of a cross, lay the dead body of Keola, the Hawaiian!

Welsh fell upon Tom and pinned him down. With a huge paw he tore open the tunic of his pajamas and fumbled at his breast.

"Where are those pearls?" he roared. "Wot 'ave you done with 'em?"

Tom, whose breath was clean gone, made no reply. Welsh sprang up, caught Douchet by the hair and shook him clear of the ground.

"You French rat!" he cried. "Wot the —— are you doin' 'ere? Answer me that, you traitor!"

"I—I come for dose pearl," gasped the Frenchman. "I come to keel him for dose pearl."

"'Ave you got 'em?"

"No. He shoot at me and then ze —— tent come down. I try to get heem wit' my knife."

Welsh tore at the Frenchman's pajamas and explored his person thoroughly, leaving him nearly naked, but the pearls were not to be found.

"Look out, Reddy!" called Davison suddenly, for Tom had risen to his feet.

The revolver still hung from his wrist by the leather thong, and he raised it and fired point-blank at Welsh. But his arm was aching from the bite, the giant's figure was merely spectral in the dancing light of the lantern, and the shot went wide. Welsh reached him with a bound, tore the weapon from his grasp and struck him with his fist, full in the face.

Tom did not wholly lose consciousness. He felt himself being trussed up in some fashion and then dragged bodily along the ground as they dragged sacks of guano. He smelled the sickish odor of trade gin, a warm liquor flooded his mouth and burned his lips, and, gasping and coughing, he came to his senses.

He was sitting under a tree, his back against it. His ankles were bound together and his arms hauled above his head by a rope tied tightly around each of his thumbs. Welsh stood confronting him, the ends of the ropes, which had been cast over a limb of the tree, in his hand. Davison, with the light, was holding a gin-bottle to his lips. Douchet stood by, the bare knife still in his hand, and in the rear Cox hovered, his erubescent nose gleaming on a face as white as chalk, his smile gone for once, and anxiety and fear in his eyes.

BEYOND the circle of light it was pitch dark, but far off on the horizon, just barely visible, was the first thin streak of dawn. The palms creaked and swayed in the southerly wind, and the air was dank and sodden with the coming storm. Inland the birds rustled and chattered uneasily, and Tom could hear from Effingham's tent the sick man's steady, tearing cough. His mind registered these impressions vaguely, for he was still dazed and his arms ached horribly from the tension on his thumbs. Welsh gave the ropes a jerk.

"Stand up!" said he hoarsely.

He was drunk and swaying on his feet, a terrible figure of primitive passion and power. Tom rose in response to the tension.

"Matthews," said Welsh, "where are those pearls?"

"I don't know," said Tom. "One of you swine who wanted to gamble for them and lost has stolen them."

"You lie! You've 'idden them. Give them up or tell where they are. If you don't——" He gave another pull on the rope and Tom felt exquisite agony thrill through his arms. It filled him with blind rage.

"You —— brutes!" he cried, "I tell you they're gone! You've stolen them, after I'd promised you a share, too. I'd have made good, you fools, but now I'll see you

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all ——. And you'll pay for this, if it takes a hundred years!"

"Oh, I say, stop this!" It was Cox's voice, tremulous but resolute. "Let that man alone! He's a good chum, Tommie is, and he's played square. What a beastly pack of brutes you are!" Douchet turned with an oath and menaced him with his knife. Cox retreated hurriedly. "I haven't a weapon, blast you!" said he, "but I'm going to get one."

"Matthews," said Welsh, "give in! Tell where the bloomin' things are and we'll whack up again. I've nothin' against you, man, but that story o' whackin' up when you're good an' ready while we stands 'oppin' from one foot to the other don't go down. You can't 'ave all that swag to yourself. Do you squeal?"

Tom ground his teeth and his eyes blazed, but he said nothing. Welsh gathered the two ropes and hauled viciously. Tom was jerked almost clear of the ground, every joint from thumb to shoulder seeming to rend apart, when there was a sudden dull sound. As though from a blow, Welsh seemed to leap into the air, then plunged headforemost into the sand!

There was no sound of a shot; nothing had stirred apparently, and excepting for the wind in the trees it was so still that Tom could hear Effingham coughing in his tent. The taut ropes relaxed, Tom's arms fell to his side, quite benumbed, and he fumbled helplessly at the ropes to release himself. Douchet stood facing him for an instant with a startled expression, then he leaped at Tom, his knife in his hand, his arm raised to strike!

The blow was never given.

Tom heard a soft thud, something like the impact of a man's fist on a sack of meal, the Frenchman threw up his arms, his whole body went limp and he collapsed in a heap. He writhed spasmodically for a moment, then lay quite still. A heavy knife was buried in his ribs, the hilt protruding beneath his arm!

Tom, with his own knife, cut the ropes from his hands and ankles, then sprang forward and snatched the revolver from Welsh's belt. Davison stood stupefied, his flabby jowls hanging and his eyes staring. From where he stood it looked as though Tom had stabbed Douchet.

Welsh rolled over and sat up. He felt the side of his head, dazedly, and his hand came away covered with blood. Something had shattered and torn the cartilage of his ear. He got to his feet unsteadily—to find Tom confronting him with the revolver.

"Hold hard there, Welsh!" said Tom. "Not a move or you'll never make another. The tables are turned, you see."

Welsh looked around and saw the body of Douchet. "So they are," said he. "You've done for that chap. 'E's good and dead, 'e is. But what 'it me?"

Cox came running up with a rifle. When he saw the situation he stared and blinked in bewilderment. "Why, what's all this? I thought—I say, good for you, Tommie! Davie, you ——scoundrel, what do you mean by standing in with those black guards? Why couldn't you take Tommie's word? Now you've ruined me and the lot of us."

"Don't be too sure of that, Cox. I count you out of this thing. As for you, Davison, I esteem you as what Cox just said you were. You're pretty much of a beast, as every one knows, but you're a poor figure as a cutthroat. I'd have been white to you, man. As it is, I'll pay you for your part in this; you can lay to that!"

"So be it!" said Davison, tugging savagely at his mustache. "By gad, sir, it's easy for you to talk, standing there with a gun at our heads, and it was easy enough for you to promise things with your blasted cock-of-the-walk air and supercilious manner after winning all the pearls. The rest of us are ruined men. I haven't a —— rag of conscience left, but, by gad, I'd rather steal from you outright than stand around waiting for you to dole out largess."

"By George!" said Tom, "if I didn't have a prejudice against cold-blooded murder, I'd kill both of you in your tracks. One of you two or Douchet killed Keola, and either one of you three or the boys stole the pearls. You strung me up here when you were three to one. Well, you're two to one now, for I believe Cox is square, and from now on I'm prepared for you. Without those pearls I'm a pretty desperate man myself, and I'm going to fight for them till the last ditch!"

It was gray dawn and yellow streaks were shooting up from the Eastern rim of the sea, struggling through layers of sullen clouds. Joey, the young Gilbert Islander, came running up, quite out of breath.

"*Ehipi!* [ship]," he cried excitedly, "*ehipi* come!"

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CHAPTER IX

"COMMODORE" FRAWLEY ARRIVES

THE four men looked at each other.

"My Gawd!" said Welsh. "It's old man Wiggins, and we've left all that shell on the bloomin' beach! If Wiggins see it, 'e'll leave us all 'ere to rot 'less 'e gets 'is 'ands on the pearls!"

They ran toward the beach and followed it, past the dwellings and the neglected shell, to a low hill where Effingham, in a swirl of birds, stood looking through a battered old telescope. Every morning and evening since they had been on the island he had climbed that mound and swept the sea with the glass. The windrack was flying low, the sea was everywhere dotted with white-caps and to the southward the horizon was blurred with a dingy brown like a pall of smoke.

Off the eastern end of the island, not more than five miles away, a schooner under full sail was bearing down to the anchorage. That it was not their own ship they saw at a glance, for Wiggins's schooner carried square foretopsails and this was a straight fore-and-after. Moreover, she was clean and white, with none of the dingy look of a trader.

"What do you make of her?" asked Tom anxiously.

"Nothing definite," said Effingham; "I've a shrewd guess, though. If I'm right or not, you can mark one thing: that schooner's not here on a pleasure-trip."

"What's the guess, old man?"

Effingham closed the telescope with a snap.

"Did you ever hear," he asked, "of a man named 'Commodore' Frawley?"

"Frawley?" said Tom. "Why, he's the other man who applied for the charter, isn't he?"

"Precisely! The man who applied for, and in all probability has it. At any rate his coming means one thing: trouble, short, sharp and sudden; especially when he sees all that shell lying around loose. Now's the time to bury those pearls of yours, Tom."

"I would if I had them to bury. They were stolen from me last night."

"What!"

"They were stolen by some one who will answer for it later," said Tom, "unless it was Douchet, who's lying dead up there under the trees. Mr. Welsh and company took a fancy to string me up by the thumbs a while ago, Effingham, for what reason the Lord only knows, as the pearls were already gone. There was some shooting, and I wonder you didn't hear the racket."

"You can lie all you wants about the pearls, Matthews," said Welsh grimly, "but you'd 'ave been strung up proper if I 'adn't got that crack on the 'ead."

Effingham opened the telescope and took another look at the schooner.

"I did hear a shindy of some kind," said he, "but I was too done up to take much interest. I saw that your tent was down, though, and that somebody had knifed Keola."

He closed the telescope again and faced them. Tom saw that there was a change in the man. His languidly careless air was gone, and his face was set with deep, purposeful lines.

"Those cursed pearls," said he, "were bound to make strife and trouble. They'll turn up later and probably lead to more battle, murder and sudden death. Just now there's some important business on hand and we'd best stand together till it's over. There's about one chance in a hundred that that schooner isn't coming here heeled for trouble, whether or not it's Frawley. It may be necessary to put up a fight."

"Wot are we goin' to fight with?" asked Welsh.

It was a problem, indeed, if the visitors were well armed, which was almost a foregone conclusion. Every man on the island had a knife, but the only other armament was a pin-fire shotgun, a couple of rifles, one of them an old needle-gun such as the German firm supplied for trade—about as dangerous to the man who fired it as to any one else—and three revolvers. That was the sum total.

"Not much of an arsenal," said Tom. "Some of us ought to keep under cover with it, which will be that much advantage if it comes to a scrap. The rest can be the reception committee."

"Good generalship," said Effingham. "If they're over-hasty, though, they may cut up rough with that committee."

"I'll take that end of it," said Tom.

"Me, too," said Welsh. "I'm not much on the shoot, and if it comes to narstiness

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I'd rather get these two fins on the man that tries it."

"Walter," said Tom as they hurried to get together the guns and ammunition, "who killed Douchet? *They* think it was I, but it wasn't. And what the deuce was it that keeled Welsh over? If I hadn't heard you coughing all the time, over in your tent, I'd think you were at the bottom of it."

"My cough was pretty bad," said Effingham. "I wasn't capable of much damage last night. Perhaps Joey knows something. He'd be very sore on some one about Keola, you know. The boys were great friends."

The schooner came on in a smother of foam and luffed in the little bay with a great snapping of sail and creaking of blocks. A boat put off at once, and as it grounded, half a dozen men leaped out and ran it up on the beach.

The man who had wielded the nineteen-foot steering-oar stepped ashore, halting a moment to light the stub of a cigar which he held clenched in his strong teeth. He was tall, and very broad and powerful of physique. His forehead was wide, the hair gray about his temples, and his eyes deep-sunken and of a cold, steely blue. He wore white duck trousers, canvas shoes, carefully pipe-clayed, and a blue serge jacket.

He glanced about him shrewdly with a masterful air of self-possession. Tom stood with folded arms, leaning against the doorway of a hut, talking to Effingham. As the man stepped ashore Effingham gripped his arm, his fingers like steel bands.

"That's the man!" said he in a tense whisper. "That's Commodore Frawley!"

TOM surveyed the visitor with interest as he walked toward him on the beach. He was a man whose name had supplied elaborate material for gossip in various parts of the world. Some years before he had stolen one of the finest schooner yachts in Gravesend Bay. He accomplished this by promoting a rather fantastic scheme for touring out-of-the-way parts of the world with excursion parties of writers and artists who were supposed to produce material to be sold for vast sums to various periodicals. A syndicate was formed to charter the yacht, which was well stocked with essentials and luxuries. This was a tribute to Frawley's ability as a promoter, for the project was more or less chimerical and would never have held water under proper investigation.

Once beyond the three-mile limit, with the charter safe in a locker and master's papers in his pocket, Frawley forgot all about the syndicate and the purpose of the charter and went cruising on his own account. The "excursionists" were dropped at near-by ports, and for three years Frawley had lorded it with the stolen yacht unmolested by the syndicate, which was doubtless ashamed of itself for not having looked more closely into Frawley's past record.

He had flown Commodore and Vice-Commodore flags of well-known yacht-clubs, regardless of the Yachting Register, and thus earned the title of Commodore, though he had never held any executive office whatever in any yacht-club.

Then the toils closed in on him and the yacht was finally seized at Auckland under attachment and sold for more ignominious uses than a gentleman's cruiser. Such was the audacity of Frawley that he eventually bought the yacht for a song through an agent, and turned his undoubted talents into the hodgepodge scramble for dollars in the South Seas.

He had promoted schemes for planting cacao and vanilla in Samoa, and was the active, working member of an influential firm in Canton composed of Chinamen who were intimately concerned in various enterprises among the islands. They bought copra, pearls and *bêche-de-mer*, had a small fleet of schooners in trade, and of these and other activities "Commodore" Frawley was the guiding spirit. In spite of a bluff heartiness and geniality of manner, it was said that no way of making a dollar was too mean or dishonorable for his consideration.

He came briskly along the beach, his muscular hands thrust in the pockets of his coat, puffing at the stub of his cigar. Tom noted that the crew of the whale-boat carried rifles. Frawley cast a shrewd glance at the pearl-shell, round which there still clung the awful odor of rotten oysters, and sniffed the air daintily as Tom and Welsh came forward to meet him.

"How are you, gentlemen?" said he. "Nice place you have here, but I wouldn't recommend it as a health resort. The stink of pearl-shell is pretty poisonous, not to mention the guano."

"Glad to see you, Commodore," said

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Tom mendaciously, for want of something better; "we've been wondering what wind blew you in. Come up and have a peg and tell us about it."

"Certainly, boys," said Frawley. "I'm here on official business, but I'll take a drink with you. We've something to talk over."

As they found seats in the *lanai* on wooden packing-boxes Tom saw that the schooner was tossing furiously at her short cable. The impending storm was at hand and the brown mist was sweeping closer over the sea. Frawley's eyes roved about appraisingly while a Kanaka boy opened one of the last bottles of gin.

"Where are the others?" he asked.

His question was partly answered by Cox and Davison strolling over from one of the huts. They were unable to restrain their curiosity and paid no attention to Tom's scowl of disapproval. Frawley nodded as he poured himself a drink.

"Come into the circle, you fellows. I want you all to hear what I've got to say. Meantime, here's luck!" and he tossed off the drink.

"Boys," he continued, "this is a pretty lonely station. I expect you're rather tired of it, eh?"

"W'y, that all depends," said Welsh. "Now to my mind this 'ere's a cosy, tight little island. Like 'ome to me, it is."

"I guess we can stick it out a while longer," said Tom dryly. "What is it, Frawley?"

"Well, if that's the way you all feel, I expect I've bad news for you. The fact is I've got the charter for working this island!"

"The —— you say!" this from Welsh.

"Fact! I'm surprised to find you fellows here. I didn't think Wiggins was fool enough to make himself liable this way. It's a serious offense. However, that's not your fault, and as far as I can see no harm has been done, only now the jig is up and you'll have to clear. I don't believe you'll mind changing to a sweeter atmosphere. You must have had a rough time, and mind you," he swept a glance around the group, "I've every intention of being reasonable."

Tom sat twirling his untasted drink around in his tin cup.

"What's your proposition, Commodore?" he asked, without raising his eyes.

"Why, I'll tell you. You fellows have worked hard at the guano, it seems, and—and getting out that shell. It saves me just that much trouble, and as long as you are paid for your labor I don't suppose it matters whether it's Wiggins's money or mine. Then of course there's that shell and—and the pearls. Did I mention that I knew there was shell here when I applied for the charter?"

Tom licked his dry lips. "Go on!" he said.

Frawley looked from face to face, smiling blandly. Tom sat looking steadily at the tin cup in his hand. His indignation was turning to hard, cold desperation as he waited for the ultimatum.

"I don't imagine you want to work for me," continued Frawley, biting hard on his cigar, "and anyway I don't want you. So I'm willing to give you a passage to any port I make, or, if you prefer it, there's your own boat, a good able sea-boat, and I'll outfit you with provisions. You are to turn over to me all the pearls you found, and if they're worth anything I'll give you five per cent. of their value, and in addition pay every one of you white men a hundred dollars, gold, for the work you've done. Come, now. I call that liberal."

WELSH sprang up with an inarticulate bellow. A clubbed rifle in the hands of one of Frawley's men struck him from behind and he fell sprawling! Tom tugged at the revolver at his belt. Frawley's men were all on their feet, their rifles cocked and held in readiness. Frawley stood watching Tom, his hands in his coat pockets, his lips twitching with an ironical smile.

"I wouldn't try anything rash," said he suavely. "You might regret it. My men are ready to drill you at a word, and there's another boat-load just landing down below. I'd as soon shoot or hang the lot of you for a pack of thieves as not. Better take my offer under consideration."

There was a hollow cough close by. "Frawley!" said a soft, silken voice.

Effingham stood in the doorway of the nearest hut, his elbow against the jamb, his other hand resting lightly on his hip. He appeared almost lazily calm and looked at the Commodore with his accustomed half-mocking smile, but Tom saw that his eyes were as hard as flint. The smile faded from the Commodore's face and Tom fancied that it paled slightly under the tan.

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"So, Commodore," said Effingham, "at your old tricks, eh?"

"I've made myself plain," said the Commodore. "If you're one of this crew and heard me, you understand well enough."

"Oh, I heard you, but it wasn't necessary. The sight of you was enough to show that there was something dirty on foot. But it's come to a showdown, Commodore. Do you know what I think? I think you've turned your last trick."

The Commodore laughed harshly.

"Effingham, you're a fool! The odds are against you."

He looked swiftly over his shoulder at the second boat's crew beaching their boat, then back at Effingham. Tom thought it odd the way the two men faced each other as though there were no other actors in the drama. It was odd, too, that in spite of his sneering assurance there was something anxious and wavering about the big Commodore, while Effingham, who despite his tall figure weighed scarcely more than a hundred pounds, seemed perfectly self-possessed and confident in his attitude.

"*You* are the fool, Frawley. I've had you covered since you came. Joey, the Kanaka boy, has a gun trained on you right now, and Joey can shoot! I taught him. But Joey's not going to hurt you, you bogus Commodore and swindler. I'm going to do it myself!"

As he stepped out from the doorway, his right hand dropped from his hip and rested lightly by his thigh. There was a report and a flash. Frawley had shot through the pocket of his coat! Tom felt the wind of the bullet and the pungent powder-smoke in his nostrils.

At the same instant something spun by him in the air like a flash of light; there was an odd, thudding sound, the Commodore's knees sagged under him, and with a sobbing oath he fell forward on his face, a knife buried in his breast!

But he had withdrawn his hand with the revolver from his pocket and, raising himself on his elbow, he fired again. Effingham snatched Davison's revolver, fired once and Frawley collapsed! Stepping quickly forward, Effingham deliberately fired the remaining five charges into the writhing body; then, coughing violently, with a bloody foam on his lips, he fell to his knees and then to full length beside the body of the Commodore!

CHAPTER X

ALL BUT FIVE

NOT another man had moved. Now, with an oath, a sailor raised his rifle, but before he could pull the trigger there was a roar and a flash within the hut and he pitched forward, shot through the head. Welsh, who had been merely stunned, sprang at the man nearest him, wrenched the rifle from his hands and cracked the man's skull with a full-arm swing. Tom felt something scorching plow through his scalp, and, turning, saw the man who had shot at him kneeling and pumping in another cartridge.

He dropped quickly on all fours as the man fired, and Cox, who had been standing behind him, spun round and fell with a bullet in his brain. Tom promptly shot the sailor and took his rifle and cartridge-belt.

He turned to shoot at a man aiming at Davison, but before he could do so, the latter leaped forward with surprising agility, grasped the gun-barrel and smote his opponent on the jaw. As the man staggered, Davison sprang upon him, stabbing wickedly with his knife.

There were yells from the other boat's crew, and the two remaining men in the *lanai* took to their heels and ran toward their companions. Joey stood in the doorway of the hut with Effingham's rifle and took a pot-shot at the fleeing men. He missed them both, but the bullet struck one of the advancing sailors in the leg and he fell with a shriek.

The wind had risen to a gale and with it came torrents of rain. There was the sharp report of a gun from the schooner and a moment later another. She was tossing about, half-smothered, with two rags of sail set and flying loose. The seamen halted when their two comrades joined them. At the second report of the schooner's cannon they fired a harmless volley into the *lanai*, then turned and fled toward their boats, dragging the wounded man with them.

"After them!" roared Welsh, and ran down the beach, shooting as he ran.

Three of the Kanaka boys, brave in the enemy's retreat, followed him. One of them was armed with the useless fowling-piece, with which he blazed away at the sail-

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ors as fast as he could load, another had the needle-gun, and the third took Effingham's rifle from Joey. Joey was on his knees bending over Effingham.

A sudden gust of wind tore off the roof of the *lanai* and whirled it away in fragments, the canvas windbreak sailing off like a great white bird. Joey grasped Tom by the arm.

"Tomi," said he, "Epihama very sick. More better take inside."

Effingham was lying with his head on his arms, a pool of blood under him. There was no wound on his body, for both of Frawley's bullets had missed. He was unconscious and breathing heavily. Together they lifted him and carried him into one of the palm-leaf shelters, for the tents were down, and made him as comfortable as possible on one of the bunks. Tom could think of no restorative other than gin, and went in search of some in the wreck of the *lanai*. He heard firing down the beach, and then a crash of shots from seaward. Davison was standing in the driving rain, watching with straining eyes.

"Look!" he cried, "I believe the beggars have potted Welsh and the boys, and by the Lord Harry, they're going to make the schooner!"

Tom caught glimpses of the boat tossed like a cork close to the vessel. Somehow her crew must have got aboard, for presently they saw her, empty and adrift, while the schooner, having slipped her cable, pointed for the open sea under her staysail and a rag of foresail.

Had she been less stanch and able she would never have made it, but she was a fin-keel schooner, built to eat up into the wind's eye and had won races against some of the finest yachts in the world when oak and teak and not buckling metal plates and spider-web girders were the staples of yacht construction. She shaved the reef by no more than a few fathoms, lying down almost flat, and a quarter of an hour later was lost to view. Welsh came reeling up the beach alone, a wild figure, with a bullet wound in his cheek.

"The fools!" he cried; "they would stand there on the beach, yellin' and shootin' at nothin', and they potted 'em from the boat. The 'ole three are deader than Davy's sow. Gimme a drink o' that gin!"

Tom had found a bottle nearly full and passed it to Welsh, who gulped down several swallows. Then Tom went to Effingham. Joey had been administering the Polynesian massage known as *lomi-lomi*. Effingham's eyes were open, but he was very weak, and waved away the gin. His eyes looked a question.

"They've gone," said Tom; "cleared out with the schooner. We three and Welsh and Davison are all that are left, Walter."

Effingham smiled weakly, turned on his side, and soon fell asleep.

CHAPTER XI

"ALICE, I'VE PAID THE SCORE!"

TOWARD evening the rain ceased and there was a temporary lull in the wind. Tom found some food and took it with him to the spring. The wreck of the *lanai* with the stark bodies lying in pools of water was too gruesome a neighborhood for his nerves.

When he reviewed the events of the past few days he was surprised to find he was not horror-stricken. He felt as though he were very old and tired, as though eons had passed since he and his companions had come to open hostility. His nerves and brain were benumbed through reaction, and he was so overwhelmed with lassitude that he found it impossible to marshal his thoughts into any sort of sequence.

Effingham had been right about the pearls. Wherever they might be now, and Tom seemed to care very little at the moment, they had had their sanguinary baptism. They had been the direct cause of the killing of Keola and Douchet and indirectly of the day's bloody fight, for that might not have taken place had not Commodore Frawley made his outrageous offer. What was the next move to be?

Tom was in no state of mind to feel regret for Cox or the Kanaka boys, but he shivered when he recalled the icy deliberation with which Effingham had slain Frawley. There was something uncanny in the courage and fatal accuracy of the dying man. But for him the Commodore and his crew would have wiped them all out, and it occurred to Tom that he owed Effingham more than this, for it was plain enough now that Effingham had disabled Welsh and killed Douchet just in time to save his life.

No one else had the knack of flinging a knife with such deadly precision, yet Tom

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would have sworn that at the exact time of the episode he had heard Effingham's cough at some distance away.

He was so lost in thought that he did not see Joey beside him till the latter spoke.

"Tomi," said he, "Epihama speak you come."

Tom followed the boy to Effingham's shelter. On the way he saw Welsh and Davison in another shack, their heads close together in conversation. He was shocked at the change in his friend. Effingham was propped up, smoking a cigarette, but so weak he could hardly carry it to his lips. His face was sunken and ghastly in its pallor, save for a bright spot on each cheek. When he spoke it was in a whisper.

"Sit down, Tommie, and tell Joey to clear out."

"Tommie," said he, when Joey had gone, "there have been strenuous times!"

"Yes, old man, but don't let's talk about it till you get stronger. You need rest and quiet to put you on your feet."

"Never mind that. I'm elected, Tom. The game's up and I've got to say some things while I'm able. Give me a drink; I'm as weak as a kitten."

Tom poured some gin in a cup and held it to his lips. It gave the sick man temporary strength and he continued in a stronger voice.

"Don't look so glum, man. The strain has used up my nerve-force and set matters forward a day or two; that's all. How about those resolutions, now, Tommie? Still in evidence?"

"I give it up, Walt. Too many things have happened and I've got to get straightened out mentally. Never mind about me. Don't talk——"

Effingham raised a protesting hand.

"I tell you time's precious. Don't waste it. Keep that gin handy, and if I begin to slump pour it into me. Now put your hand under the mats here, just by my head and take out what you find."

TOM did as directed. He brought forth a paper folded and sealed, and, groping further, to his astonishment a familiar oil-skin pouch!

"By Jove!" he cried; "the pearls!"

Effingham smiled.

"Put that paper in your pocket," said he. "You are not to open it till—afterward. Tommie, I stole the pearls myself. It was the only thing to do under the circumstances. I knew that if I didn't, one of the others would, and they were safer with me. You are too infernally trustful and careless. You never were a match for those beasts because you're too ready to trust men who are absolutely past trusting. You think that that 'one touch of nature' business is latent in all of us, but it isn't, Tommie; not in the South Seas. Take Douchet, for example. Give me a drink!"

Tom complied and Effingham continued:

"It was easy enough to get the pearls, for you were as dead to the world as the Seven Sleepers; so I took them for safe-keeping. Afterward I heard the row, followed the lynching party and managed to crack Welsh on the ear with a lump of coral and make a center shot on Douchet at the psychological moment. I'd have done for Welsh, too, but I had only the one knife and I was saving that for Frenchy."

"But," said Tom, "I heard you coughing the whole blessed time down here in your tent!"

"No, you didn't. That was Joey. I made him go inside and cough like the devil. I felt a spell coming on up there behind a palm, and nearly had a fit fighting it down. It would have spoiled the whole show. You see, Tommie, there hasn't been a chance from the first to play fair with these chaps. They wouldn't stand for division and they wouldn't stand for a trusteeship. They wouldn't stand for any other man beating them out at cards. When that kind of cussedness is so highly developed, there's no possible chance for peace. Some one had to have the lion's share, somehow, and I made sure that it would be you. I suppose you know that in that last round at poker I dealt cold hands all round."

"No, I didn't."

"Well, it's a fact. That pair was working up to a murderous pitch, and it was the only way to put an end to the game and cut the agony short. I was getting weaker every minute with the cursed cough coming on and knew I'd be out of the running soon, so I had to do it. And now, Tommie, you've got that bag safe, what are you going to do with it? Don't tell me that you're going to turn soft and let Davison and Welsh in after all that has been."

Tom was balancing the pouch on his palm.

"I don't know, Walt. I owe it to you to

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do as you say, of course. I'm deathly sick of this fighting and butchery," he shuddered, "and the poor wretches didn't have them after all, though they tried hard enough to get them. Of course I didn't win them fairly——"

An enigmatical smile played round Effingham's lips.

"I guessed right, thank fortune," said he, as though to himself. "Tommie, I wash my hands of you. Do as you please, only *don't* let them know till you're safe away from here. Now's your time to bury that pouch—deep."

At this moment Davison stuck his head in at the door and his eyes instantly focused on the pouch in Tom's hand. "I—er—er—was looking for you fellows. We've got the balance of the gin together—a couple of quarts. I guess we all need some. How are you, Effingham?"

"Fine!" said Effingham.

He put a great effort into the utterance of the single word and it sounded loud and strong.

"All right," said Davison, his eyes still centered, as if fascinated, on the oil-skin pouch. "Come and join us and have a peg. See you later," and he vanished.

Effingham lay back, breathing very faintly, his eyes closed. For a moment Tom thought he was gone, but presently he opened his eyes wearily.

"The fat's in the fire now, son," said he, weakly. "Tommie, I'm nearly done. Look out for those chaps now. You and Joey stand together. He's a good boy and you can trust him to the limit. You've got to beat those men out."

"Walt," said Tom gravely, "it'll be all right, old man. You seem to have been on hand in my interest at every turn, the best friend that ever a man had. I—I want to tell you how I admire you and thank you——" He suddenly choked.

Effingham feebly held out a hand as cold as ice. Tom held it for a moment in his. When he released it, it fell inertly. Effingham's lips moved and Tom bent closer.

"Leave—a while, Tommie. I'm tired—so tired! Come back later——"

"Yes, old man," said Tom, and was going toward the door when he heard a loud whisper. He returned and bent close. "Tommie—that man on the yacht I spoke of—his name was Frawley. Understand? Commodore Frawley. I heard he was after charter in Suva—that's the reason I came. Knew he'd be here some time. Looked for his ship every day, waiting—waiting to kill him like a dog! I'm quite content, Tommie. Run along a while."

Tom went out and sat on the beach, a prey to mingled emotions. His body was utterly exhausted, yet his nerves were wrought to an emotional pitch approaching hysteria. His mind was alert now to the horror of all that had taken place, the vices laid bare without shame; the ten corpses lying unburied and staring at the sky; but most of all to the tragic pathos of Effingham, with all his fine attributes, dying a wrecked and broken thing, yet quite content and unafraid.

He rose and paced to and fro, for he could not keep still. His steps led him continually toward the hut, and several times he looked in the door. Effingham was lying quite still except for a continual fluttering of his hands. The flush on his cheeks had faded to a waxen pallor. Joey stood peering in the doorway, a look of concern on his brown face, and finally Tom, convinced that the end had come, for the fluttering hands were still, stepped within the hut. Suddenly Effingham sat bolt upright. His eyes were wide open and looking fixedly at some point before him.

"Alice," said he, in a voice strong and clear as though in conversation with some one at a little distance, "you don't understand. It was fair and square in the open, and man to man. I've paid the score!"

He fell back on the matting. Tom stood a while in silence, then tenderly closed the eyes of his friend.

CHAPTER XII

AN ATTACK AND A SURPRISE

THE wind was still high and the air full of salt spume flicked from the crests of the white-caps and flung broadcast. The sea was very rough, but the tail of the storm was passing and the belated clouds were racing overhead toward the north as though to overtake the main body of the disturbance. Tom had left Joey with Effingham and gone outside, feeling utterly miserable and alone.

Somewhere off in the darkness, Davison began to sing, "Not a sparrow falleth," but suddenly ceased as though a hand had

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been clapped over his mouth. It took his mind for a moment from the passing of Effingham, and diverted it to the problem of Welsh, Davison and the oilskin pouch which he now held in his hand.

What was he to do? They knew that he had the pearls. Also, they would not scruple to get them by any means whatever, and he must anticipate any move they might make.

Of the eleven men who had come to the island there were now four left. Surely the pearls had taken their toll of tragedy, and these wretches must be as disgusted with strife and butchery as he was himself. At any rate there were pearls enough for them all, and to avoid any more discord of a violent nature he was going to offer every man an equal share and turn it over at once. It seemed the only solution possible to making life bearable for the time they must remain on this hateful island. So thinking, Tom fell asleep.

When he awoke it was broad daylight. The storm had blown itself out and the sun was shining, half way to the meridian. The wind had hauled around and the trade was back again, freshening the air like wine. Long lines of birds were filing off to the far north, their lines of flight spread out over the sea like the sticks of a fan. Joey was boiling coffee over a stove made of an old oil tin. Tom asked of Welsh and Davison.

"I don' know," said Joey. "I no see long time now. I think drunk."

Tom went to the door of the hut where they had been the night before, but it was empty. Several gin bottles lay about on the floor. He had the oilskin pouch in his hand, swinging by the strand of fiber. He hallooed at the top of his voice several times. Then, not far away, he heard an answering shout, but saw no one. He started to walk in the direction of the sound, thinking it odd that neither of the men appeared.

There was a sharp report. His brain had no more than time to record it, for something struck him like a blast, the sunlight became utter darkness and conscious life went out on the instant.

JOEY was bending over him, kneading sensitive parts of his anatomy with a strong brown hand. He felt as though his head were an enormous thing, without substance, yet with something beating, beating upon it that caused exquisite anguish. He put up his hand and felt a thick bandage that was sticky to the touch. He seemed to be burning up, tormented by the devil of thirst.

"Water, Joey," said he thickly, and at once Joey put a cup to his lips.

Tom had never tasted anything so delicious. Joey's beautiful, melancholy black eyes were full of a tremendous concern.

"Tomi," said he, a break in his voice, "I been 'fraid. I been 'fraid you *maté* [dead]. I 'fraid stop this place all 'lone."

"What happened?"

"They shoot! You fall, all same *maté*. I like kill 'um, but they take all guns last night. No got gun left. They all same *tiapolo* [devils]. Now they go 'way; take boat; take all *kaukau* [food]."

Tom sat up with a jerk. "Gone?" he cried.

"They go now. Fix boat. They go before, only too much drunk. Take long time fix boat."

"Help me up, Joey!"

Tom stood, trembling for a while, his knees inclined to give way. Joey filled a tin cup with hot coffee, and after a time Tom gathered enough strength to walk. Welsh and Davison had deliberately shot him from ambush. The bullet had struck him over the eye and glanced off, inflicting a shocking wound that missed snuffing out his life by the barest fraction of an inch. Although they had taken the other weapons, Tom found that they had overlooked his own revolver, which was still in the belt at his waist.

"Come on, Joey," said he; "we'll see about this!"

Their own boat was the only one left, for the one belonging to the schooner had drifted off in the storm. They had launched it and it was riding a dozen yards from the shore. Davison stood in the stern, attempting to steady it with an oar—with poor success, for he was drunk, and singing at the top of his voice. Tom caught the words:

> "Oh, hear us when we cry to Thee
> For those in peril on the sea."

Welsh, naked to the waist, was wading toward the boat with an armful of rifles which he tossed in and returned to the beach where he knelt and busied himself

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making a bundle of small odds and ends. Tom examined his revolver and assured himself that every cylinder was loaded. Then, cold, implacable, his nerves set like steel, he walked toward the kneeling giant.

Davison, with a shout, dropped his oar and picked up a rifle. The bullet threw up a puff of sand, but Tom walked on without so much as a glance at the boat. Joey threw himself on the ground and began wriggling through the beach-grass toward the water. Welsh started to his feet and, seeing Tom, stood for a moment gaping. He looked at the boat, hesitated, then made for Tom with a curse. The weapons were evidently all in the boat, for Welsh was unarmed. His enormous chest was bare, and hanging there Tom saw the oilskin pouch.

Davison kept up a fusillade of rifle-bullets, loading and firing as fast as he could work the mechanism, but drink and the rocking boat spoiled his aim effectually and the bullets did no more than plow up the sand.

So absorbed was he in this futile marksmanship that he did not see Joey, who had reached the shore in a wide circle, slip from a point of coral rock into deep water. He was still shooting when a brown arm hooked over the bow behind him and a lithe, glistening body slid over the gunwale into the boat. The next instant a bare arm was twined around his neck with a strangling grip; he gasped and struggled to free himself, and, thrashing with arms and legs, lost his balance, his feet flew from under him, and with a splash the two bodies, intertwined, went over the side.

Tom held his cocked revolver at arm's length, took deliberate aim at the broad, hairy chest and pulled the trigger. He saw and heard the bullet strike; he saw the blood flow, but Welsh's jaw shut with a click and he came on, his lips drawn back from his set, yellow teeth. Again Tom fired and the bullet went home near the shoulder. A third shot struck the oilskin pouch and the flesh behind. The giant staggered. His jaw was dropped now, but he came on with a gurgling bellow deep in his throat, the blood welling from his mouth. Two more shots went home. The man was streaming blood. There was a terrible fire in his wicked little eyes and his face was distorted with insensate passion.

Something in Tom's nerve gave way at the monstrous vitality of the brute and his last shot went wild. He flung the empty revolver and it struck Welsh full in the face, but the next instant he was seized and swung bodily in the air above the giant's head! Then he felt the great figure totter and sway beneath him. The huge muscles refused to respond. Welsh held him aloft, poised, for a moment, then slowly toppled over forward, and Tom fell on his back in the soft sand. It was the giant's last effort.

The fall had set Tom's head to throbbing again, and a stream of blood escaping from beneath the bandage ran into his eyes and blinded him. He wiped this away with his sleeve and set the bandage as tightly as possible. Welsh was lying on his face stone dead. Joey had brought the boat to shore and was calmly making it fast to a pole of the boat-shed with a long rope. There was no sign of Davison.

Tom bent over the body of Welsh and removed the oilskin packet from his neck. The bullet had snipped away a finger's breadth of the covering, and what Tom saw made him gasp with amazement. He hastily opened the pouch and poured out the contents. They consisted of a double handful of smooth, round pebbles!

CHAPTER XIII

EFFINGHAM'S MESSAGES

JOEY brought food from the surf-boat and prepared a meal. When they had finished he took a pick and shovel and set himself industriously to digging. There was much to be done in disposing of the dead, but Tom found that the least effort set his head to spinning, and he was obliged to leave the work to Joey.

He went to the little clearing by the spring and threw himself at full length, as Effingham had been wont to do. The act in itself reminded him of something—the sealed paper that the dying man had given him the night before. Tom took it from his pocket and spread it open. It was a note written with pencil in a neat, delicate hand, and read as follows:

My dear Tommie:

It is a thing no living man has a right to worry about, for it is going to make mighty little difference to him, but I have a particular fancy to rest in a certain place when the gray shadows draw in close for the last time and sleep comes. You know the plot of soft grass near the spring where I have gone so often to brood over the inevitable; well, I should like to rest there, and

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am asking you to see to it if things go right with you and it so happens that you read this. I have even taken a fancy for one particular spot (the whim of a very sick man) selected during certain morbid spells when my mind was on the inexorable future. On the round black rock over the spring there is a white patch of lichen, and on a sandalwood tree a dozen yards away you will find a blaze in the bark. Stretch a line from one to the other and fifteen feet from the rock is the place I have chosen.

Tommie, I'm stepping off into the dark, with no faith, no creed, and, I am afraid, no contrition. I have only a vast curiosity to see what it's like. Yet, if there are any presiding deities, I trust they will help and guide you and bring you to your own.

Aloha!

Walter Effingham.

Tom choked as he read this posthumous message, so characteristic of the man he had known, whose stoicism was a mere cloak for the underlying sentiment. So strong had been his personality that in the familiar spot, with the letter in his hand, Tom could almost feel his presence. He carefully folded the letter and put it back into his pocket. The two marks mentioned in the note were unique and distinct, and he saw them at a glance.

Tom sat there alone for hours, thinking, the pulses in his forehead throbbing and his head aching incessantly. Only three days before he had sat on this very spot arguing with his five companions about the trusteeship of the pearls. Now they were all dead. He was the last of the ill-assorted brethren of the beach, and he owed it to Effingham that he was not lying stark with the others.

But why had Effingham given him a packet of pebbles? Could he, with his weird intuition, have foreseen what had actually taken place? He tried to adjust his mind to follow Effingham's intricate reasoning, but it led him nowhere.

Joey had finished his task, and now, together, they prepared Effingham for burial and carried his body to the spring. The shadowy smile on the dead man's lips seemed to Tom to have the same intuitive understanding behind it that it had in life. Tom stretched the line, measured off the distance and broke ground at the proper spot.

Directly under the sod the pick struck a tin tobacco-box. Tom opened it with shaking fingers. The top was stuffed with bits of cloth, but underneath, glowing with soft, beautiful luster, lay the pearls! With them was a slip of paper with a brief note:

Tommie: Here find your property. You've already found the pebbles, of course. If Welsh got you, he only got pebbles for his trouble. If you got him, you'll find these anyway. If you're both on earth you can divide these or do what you please with them, but you've probably learned by the time you read this that there's no use looking for a spark of soul or common humanity where it can not exist. It's a waste of time and sympathy, and sometimes has fatal results.

At the bottom of the box was a packet, very neatly made of an old chamois tobacco-bag, faultlessly stitched with fine thread. In this were the four large pearls and another note:

I've tried to fix this all in decency and order so it will work out right. Whatever disposal you make of the others, these four pearls are mine. I won them fairly, without having to deal queer hands. This is in the nature of a last will and testament, and I am bequeathing these to you, Tom Matthews, charging you to keep them for yourself, and, rather than let them pass into the hands of others on this island, to throw them into the sea. Luck and happiness, Tom! This is my final word, and don't forget, when the time comes, about a woman and a man's weakness! *Talofa!*

CHAPTER XIV

RESCUED

A WEEK later Tom sat kicking his heels against the summit of the cliff overhanging the sea on the windward side of the island. To-morrow, or next day at most, he and Joey would put to sea. They would have gone before, but Tom had hung on with a faint hope that something might turn up. He had no chart or compass, and not even a general knowledge of the distribution or distance of the inhabited islands north of the line.

Wiggins was long overdue, and it was hardly likely that he would ever return. He was not the man to sail his schooner all the way from Honolulu, if Frawley had the charter for working the island, for the mere matter of taking off a handful of beachcomber workmen. Still, there was always the remote chance that he might come, or that some other vessel, possibly a gunboat or cruiser, would happen in and take them off.

Joey and he had carefully rehearsed a story to account for the disappearance of the others. This concerned an epidemic of sickness following the row with Frawley and his men, and Tom had polished and re-

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vised it and smoothed off the rough edges to make it entirely plausible. The Frawley episode would have to go as it stood. Frawley had actually fired the first shot and been the aggressor, and Tom would have to take his chance on that against any story that the survivors on the schooner might tell.

They had cleaned the beach of the last vestige of pearl-shell, sinking it far out in deep water, and Tom wore the pearls in a belt around his waist. There appeared nothing further to be done except put to sea and trust to luck. Somewhere, to the north, Tom knew, was the lane of the ocean liners. Once in that, and they had a fair chance of being picked up.

The birds were all gone and Tom missed their noisy chattering and bustle. The silence had become ghastly and unbearable. A dozen times a day Tom harked to a fancied hail from one of his late companions, and as often at night he awoke in a cold sweat from some nightmare of murder and violence. Without Joey he thought he should have gone mad. The Kanaka boy was a jewel, faithful, kind and constantly cheerful, though Tom had often to suppress his tendency to dwell on rather grisly Polynesian superstitions concerning the dead.

They leaned on each other for support like two children alone in the dark. As for Joey, with Kanaka simplicity he had transferred his allegiance to Tom, and would have followed him to the ends of the earth like the faithful Friday of beloved legend.

A shadow fell athwart his face and Tom looked up. Joey, as tall and graceful as a young Polynesian god, with a flower stuck rakishly over one ear, was standing behind him.

"Tomi," said he, pointing off to the northwest, "you look tarascope. I think 'nother *ehipi* come!"

Tom could see nothing with his naked eye, but as he swept the horizon with the telescope there suddenly fell into the object-glass a couple of weather-beaten old square topsails. His heart leaped at the sight, but he held the glass on them for a long time for fear that it might be some ship passing at random. At the end of half an hour all doubts were settled. The schooner, running free, was bearing down upon the island. Tom sprang to his feet and grasped Joey's hand.

"Joey, you old son-of-a-gun," said he, "make a noise! Do something, man! Cheer, confound you! That's old man Wiggins!"

The schooner was bowling along with a fair wind and a bone in her teeth, but never had a vessel seemed to crawl so slowly over the face of the waters. They watched as long as they could in patience from the shore, and then, unable to bear the strain inactive, they launched the surf-boat, made sail on her and went scooting off on a long slant to windward to meet the schooner.

IT WAS late afternoon before they ran alongside and made fast under the vessel's lee. Wiggins, a sour old martinet, greeted Tom with more cordiality than he expected.

"I'm glad to see you, Matthews," said he, shaking hands; "we've been wondering all the voyage if we'd find you alive and kicking. I shouldn't wonder if the men have a few small bets on it."

"On me?" asked Tom, in surprise. "What for?"

Wiggins chuckled.

"You'll find out soon enough, my lad. Where are the others?"

"Captain," said Tom gravely, "I'm sorry to have to tell you that there are no others. Joey and I are all that are left."

"What!" cried Wiggins. "What do ye mean, man? I left eleven of ye. Has some cruiser been meddling, or—or, by thunder! I have it! Frawley's been making ye trouble. But where are the men? Speak out, man!"

"It's a long yarn, Captain. I'll tell it in the cuddy when the anchor's down."

At this moment a woman stepped from the companion. She took a sweeping glance at the land ahead and turned to Wiggins.

"Why, Captain," she said reproachfully, "we're nearly there and you promised to call me when we sighted land. Why did you let me sleep so long?" She looked long at the line of white beach. "There are their houses," she said, "but where are the men? There seems to be no one on the beach. What a lonely place!"

Tom stood as if turned to stone. Either his mind was wholly deranged or this was the Girl, standing there before him on the deck of Wiggins' schooner! She had not recognized him with his bandaged head, his pajamas and bearded face. For a moment he felt like sinking through the deck; then,

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straightening up, he stepped to her side.

"Dorothy!" said he.

She turned to him, startled, and drew back, her eyes wide with astonishment.

"Why—why——" she began. Then recognition dawned in her eyes. "Why, it's Tom—Tom Matthews!" and the next instant was sobbing on his shoulder.

CHAPTER XV

FAREWELL TO THE ISLAND OF PEARLS

"IF IT'S all the same to you, Miss Gardiner," said Captain Wiggins, as they sat at tea in the cuddy, "I'd like to hear what Matthews has to say at once. It's a matter o' pretty important business, and you can have all the time you want to talk afterward."

Dorothy sat close to Tom on the transom, and as he talked she held his hand and kept her eyes, with a wistful expression, on his face. Joey had gone forward with the crew. Tom told what he had to tell, while Wiggins sat blowing clouds of smoke at the skylight.

"And so," said he, when Tom had done, "this man Frawley claimed to have the charter, did he?" He went to his cabin, brought out a rolled paper from a tin chart-case and spread it on the table. "The man lied! There's the charter, right there! Frawley may have had a charter, but if he did he made it himself. The man served time for forgery once. The whole delay about this charter was because the British representative wasted a lot of time looking into Frawley's record. The man deserved all he got!"

Wiggins went ashore in the surf-boat, Tom and Dorothy watching from the quarter-rail. When he had landed and gone up the beach Tom stood waiting, wonder and curiosity in his eyes. She looked long at his drawn, weather-beaten face with its deep lines; the grimly set lips and brooding eyes, all souvenirs of his life on the beach.

This was not the Tom Matthews she had known and cared for, but it was the one she had come many thousand miles to find.

"Oh, Tom," she cried, her eyes full of tears, "can you ever forgive me? I was so hasty and unjust—I was a fool! Do you—do you still care after all these years, or is there—is there some one?—I can go back, you know. It would only be what I deserve."

Tom, regardless of an embarrassed cough from the mate and the grinning Kanaka crew, took her in his arms.

"Just after I had written that horrid letter," she continued, dabbing at her eyes with a tiny handkerchief, "Jack Holloway, who was on that yacht with you, came home. He told the whole truth about it and exonerated you entirely. In fact, Jack was very bitter against himself and the others, and made you out a good deal of a hero. Then I wrote again and again and got no answer. I wrote to people in Honolulu and learned that you had disappeared. I had notices put in California and Honolulu papers for months and months, and finally came to Honolulu myself. I thought you might hate me or have forgotten, dear, but not having heard from you, I hoped not and that you hadn't got the letters or seen the notices. Then, in Honolulu, Captain Wiggins read one of the notices and came to see me. He told me where you were and claimed a reward for the information, but I refused to pay a cent unless he brought me right along with him as a passenger and —here I am!"

THE next day Tom rowed Dorothy ashore in the dingey. He had not slept all night. How long would the devotion that had led Dorothy over so many miles to find him endure under the story he had to tell? She had come to him in his hour of loneliness and trouble. He loved her more than ever and his heart melted at the sight of her. Could he afford to jeopardize any future happiness by laying bare the horrors of that island and the hollowness of the last four years of his life? Toward morning he had come to his decision.

He led her to the little spring. Tom had placed a board at the head of Effingham's grave with a carefully carved inscription, the last paragraph a paraphrase of Whittier's beautiful poem:

To
WALTER EFFINGHAM
A GENTLEMAN OF ENGLAND
This is erected in fond
memory and respect
by a friend.

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"The Shadows o'er the Soutnern Sea
have Deepened into
Night."

Seated there, Tom told the wretched story from beginning to end. He did not spare himself, and yet, somehow, he did not find the telling so hard as he had expected. The plain facts, told in plain words, did not seem so degrading as he had been wont to feel them in his morbid brooding.

When he emptied the pearls from his belt into Dorothy's lap and showed her Effingham's letters he even found himself turning aside from his own story and growing eloquent in praise of the dead man. When he had done he sat silent for a time, awaiting her verdict. She rose and stood by Effingham's grave.

"He was a strange man, wasn't he?" she said. "I should like to have known him."

"He was a man I am proud to have called a friend," said Tom simply.

She laid her hand on his arm.

"Tom, dear," said she, "I know you are expecting me to pass some sort of judgment on you, but I can't do it. It has been a man's ordeal; things a woman has no right to construe or criticize. I think you have been tried by fire, and I think you're fine and strong and brave. When I wrote that awful letter to you, I was angry because I thought you weak and—and unmanly, like those others; and oh, Tom dear, it has been so terrible here and you've suffered so much, and I—I sent you to it——" She broke into hysterical sobbing.

"But, Dorothy," said Tom, "now that I've told you, do you still care——"

She threw her arms around his neck and nestled against his breast.

"Tom," she said softly, "I've come all this way to find you. I've told you what I think, and I'm not fit to judge any further. Don't ask me to, and don't do anything but—but just love me!"

As they sat and talked, Tom's latent optimism came to the surface and the vista of a new life began to open before his eyes. The sun, setting in a blazing riot of primary colors, touched the horizon, and, with the haste of sunset in the tropics, seemed to slide swiftly down behind the edge of the sea. Then hand in hand they walked down to the beach.

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The Camp-Fire

A Meeting-Place for Readers, Writers and Adventurers.

I SUPPOSE this is in the nature of a house-warming. There were so many demands on the one page previously at our disposal that we've had to move outdoors and build a camp-fire, with a sign up for all adventurers and adventure-lovers to stop and chat a while. All are welcome, readers and writers, wanderers, hunters, explorers, soldiers, sailors, and all the others of our own kind.

FOR one thing, Mr. Warburton, whose wanderings began in Australia and have ended—temporarily—in this country, and whose fine tale of the Boer War appears in this issue, has written as follows:

"As an interested reader of your magazine I would like to discuss with other writers any points of mutual interest, or similarity of experience, that crop up in the yarns sent you, and I believe that in this way a very interesting exchange will result."

One of the questions Mr. Warburton would like to hear talked over is to what extent spies captured in war-time are given the death-sentence, and he would particularly like to hear from Captain Fritz Duquesne, who was high up in the Boer Secret Service, "which was a marvel of secretiveness and a staggerer to the British Intelligence Department."

Mr. Warburton has written out his own observations on this point, and some time soon we'll hear them around the camp-fire.

AN ADVENTURER, who does not write himself but who misses no good story of the men who do things, asks us to start a little department giving short items as to the present whereabouts and doings of these wanderers of the earth. There are several of his old cronies whose lost trail he wishes to pick up, and he knows of no way of reaching them so good as this magazine devoted to the kind of things nearest their hearts and most likely to meet their eyes.

Again, questions come in to us about people mentioned in our stories. Some we can answer; others we have to refer to the adventurers among our readers and writers. Bully Hayes, for example, that famous adventurer of the South Seas, whose mystery we have already put forward for solution.

IF SPACE in the April number had not been so extremely limited, the following concerning the actual facts back of "The Sheriff's Story," from a letter of the author's, Nevil G. Henshaw, would have found place. As it is, it is interesting enough in itself to appear at this, the first opportunity:

It is founded on the actual escape of a man named ——, only in his case when he jumped from the boat his hands were shackled as well as his feet—one of those truths stranger than fiction that I hardly dared put in my story. He was in the swamps for three or four days, living on bark which he gnawed from the trees, before he finally discovered some one to file him free.

His lying under the boat and being rowed about by the sheriff took place later when, after his recapture, he escaped from the State Prison at Baton Rouge. He was working on the levees at the time, broke loose from the line upon their return at dusk, and was rowed about the river for the greater part of the night by the searching guards. This time he

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made good his escape, collected his family, and lived for several years as a good and worthy citizen in a strange town. He was eventually discovered by an old acquaintance, and, when the sheriff came to take him, barricaded himself in his house with his sons and declared that he would die fighting rather than return to prison. Later his friends advised him to surrender and got up a petition for his pardon, which was finally acted upon favorably by the Governor.

If you should care to use any of this [I had asked Mr. Henshaw for something about this story], kindly refrain from using Mr. ——'s name, as he is still alive, to the best of my knowledge, and might resent the liberty. Also, as he has five or six men to his credit, I would not care upon my return to Louisiana to further embellish his gun-handle."

PLEASE note this line from Mr. Henshaw's letter—"one of those truths stranger than fiction that I hardly dared put in my story." That's one of our troubles. Every now and then we have had to reject a perfectly good story because there was something in it that really happened, but sounded so improbable that no one would believe it even as fiction—something that would have made any intelligent reader grunt impatiently at the fool things these writers of stories ask people to swallow even as "make-believe." But there isn't anything to do about it except to mourn a little.

ONCE, however, we surrendered, and "took a chance anyway." If you haven't already enjoyed John A. Heffernan's "Haroun al Raschid Buchmuller of Rag-Bag" in this number, don't read the rest of this paragraph till you have, for that is the case in point, and it's too good a tale to be marred by going behind the scenes in advance.

Well, we liked the story when we read it in manuscript, and laughed over it, but the main incident was too altogether improbable. However, none of us was very strong on chemistry; perhaps it was only our ignorance that was making us lose a good story. So Mr. Olds called up a chemist friend on the phone and asked him whether oil of vitriol or sulphuric acid could have done a trick like that without everlastingly burning the legs off of poor Jake Buchmuller. The chemist friend said it couldn't. We sent the story back to Mr. Heffernan, stating our reason.

A day or so later I heard Mr. Heffernan's voice when I took down my telephone-receiver. "But," said Mr. Heffernan, and there was glee in his voice, "it *did* happen! And right here in Brooklyn at that! Some friends of mine saw it, and I also verified it at a drug-store where the victim had put in for repairs."

This was a decided shock. In the first place, I hadn't known that anything ever happened in Brooklyn. However, if a weird thing could happen anywhere, Brooklyn would be just the place for it.

MR. HEFFERNAN gave me further details. I asked him to let us have another chance at the story. Then I called up a second chemist whose name he had given me, a chemist of official position who had already investigated the case. He explained the surprising phenomenon of Jake's disappearing trousers by stating that the chemical would follow the line of least resistance, which was offered by the cloth. Same principle as a blotter.

Then we wrote to the man who had actually had the sad experience. He lives up-State, and replied on the letter-head of an established business bearing his name. Naturally, he wasn't anxious to have his name figure in the matter, but here is his letter:

The incident to which you refer "really and truly" happened, and I was the victim. I was carrying a package of test-tubes and a bottle of sulphuric acid. The latter in some unaccountable manner became cracked and very gradually oozed out. I was on a bridge car at the time, and just as I reached the terminal noticed the seam on one side of my trousers was opening. Realizing what had happened, I rushed to a drug-store and purchased a bottle of ammonia. The proprietor would not allow me to stay in the store, so I stood on the sidewalk and, before an interested and puzzled audience, poured the ammonia on, at the same time holding my trousers away from my body. I was unable to stop my trousers from disappearing, however, as the ammonia generated such heat that I was unable to apply it fast enough. After securing a pair of workingmen's trousers, I managed to get to a clothier's where I was known, and where I secured new underwear, garters, socks and shoes, as well as a suit of clothes. One sock was burned off to the shoe-top, the shoe-lace and stitching in the shoe disappeared; yet, in spite of it all, I did not suffer any burns. The sulphuric acid was chemically pure. You may like to know that I managed to get the test-tubes home safely.

So, as I said, we surrendered. It had been hard work to reject that story anyway.

ON OUR office wall hangs a four- or five-foot rattlesnake-skin. A fine specimen, but apparently nothing unusual ex-

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cept that it was cut so that the belly-scales, or "creepers," are left intact instead of being split down the middle. But if you turn it over you will find that the inside is covered with typewriting. It is a manuscript, regularly submitted to ADVENTURE, and illustrated with a half-tone pasted to the skin. And a good story, too.

It was sent to us by Mr. George F. Staat, of Encinitas, California, and we have already thanked him, but we'd also like to take our hats off to his originality. There isn't any too much of it in the world, and we welcome it even when it comes in the guise of a serpent.

THE fat sheriff, Columbus Hook, and his wife, in "The Mob and Mandy," are, Mr. Glass tells me, almost drawn from life, the former having his counterpart in the town-marshal of a little Georgia town, while Mandy is drawn faithfully from a South Georgia woman of the flat woods. The two, however, live a hundred miles apart.

Mr. Glass is with the *Atlanta Georgian*, and his newspaper work has brought him a good many experiences—among others, dodging moonshiners' bullets in the Tennessee mountains. More about him when the next Mandy story appears.

ONE of the stories in this number was born all over Germany and amid very gay surroundings. That was because Mr. Rittenberg is a confirmed wanderer, writes his best stories in the midst of noise and likes to go into a big café with his writing-pad right under the orchestra. "Big Game" was thought out in a café in cosmopolitan Wiesbaden, on coming across a real-life John Hallard. It was elaborated in other cafés in Leipsic and Berlin, and was finished off at a Berlin *Tanzsaal* at three in the morning.

Mr. Rittenberg, like Mr. Warburton, is an Australian who has spent much of his time in seeing the rest of the world. He likes an occasional "scrap." Once he had a fight with the London underground railroad, and— But I'll save that till the next John Hallard story comes out.

THERE is an insane asylum in "Getting Doctor Cameron," but it isn't a story about lunatics. ADVENTURE isn't strong on lunatics, and anyway, Mr. Phillips hasn't any special qualifications for writing about crazy people, his only experience in that line having been to wander about the streets of Santiago in fever delirium, when he'd "hooked off" from the Thirty-third Michigan Volunteers in camp at Sardinares after the armistice.

W. G. STEINER, who wrote "The Wreck of the *Tawas*," says he hasn't had any adventures except being run down in a catboat by a big lake freighter, and other little things like that. But he has spent most of his life along the Great Lakes, and knows them and the men who wrest a living from them. And he has seen some strange and thrilling things.

I ONCE referred to Algot Lange's German blood. I take it back. Mr. Lange is the son of a Danish father and an English mother, born on the steamer *George Pyman*, en route from Newcastle to Russia, with a French captain, a Scotch cargo, a Portuguese crew and a Chinese cook.

He has never even been in Germany—unless you count German East Africa, and says his German vocabulary is "restricted to the practical application of words like 'Lager-beer' and 'Leberwurst.'"

Anyhow, you'll be interested in his experiences among the South American cannibals, page 247 of this number. Many other adventures of Mr. Lange's in the valley of the Amazon you can find in his book recently published by G. P. Putnam's Sons. Possibly you have already heard him on the lecture platform.

VINCENT OSWALD'S one ambition was to become a doctor. He has been and done everything except that. Of which more later. Now he is turning his many experiences to good account in his stories.

He, too, has something to say about truth's being stranger than fiction, particularly as applied to his story in this number:

> What I consider one of the most gruesome tales I ever wrote is largely based upon facts that I suppose some readers would select as the particular portions surely composed of fiction. Indeed, very few of my stories are pure fiction. Wasn't it the brilliant O. Henry who voiced the paradox that fiction is the only form in which the truth can be told?
>
> In my story entitled "The New Tenant" that queer old Sodality Building is *very* real—built of

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the solidest kind of stone and timber, bricks and mortar; and the epitomized description of it is strictly true. Moreover, some of those characters —maybe the very ones you think fictional creations —are living human beings. I will even admit that the clever young fellow with the "amber-gray eyes" is not a pure myth, but tingles with life, has good, red blood flowing through his veins and possesses nerves the fibers of which are charged with vital fire. Altogether, he's a youth with a brain to make men curse, a face to make women rave. The Sodality is intimately familiar to me, and its whole atmosphere is heavy with tales that weep in the silence for a teller. Sensitive persons can *feel* this distinctly; and a pure, delicately-strung young child, after having been taken into the building, turned to me and said, "I don't like this place—it's *wicked!*" Some of those somber tales will, I ween, never be told; but one day, unable to resist longer the voiceless pleadings of the specters that swarm in the ambient ether of that strange place, I tried to give some notion of its character by telling, as best I could under the circumstances governing the work, the story of "The New Tenant."

WHO knows about gutta-percha? H. D. Couzens tells me it is a fascinating subject from the adventure point of view, as well as a commodity that belongs right in the buried-treasure class financially. I had always thought of it vaguely as some kind of rubber. It isn't. And the trees that produce it are not only far more scarce than rubber-trees, but are much harder to find. The supply is limited and is said to be very much cornered; big money for the man who discovers it in commercial quantities. And the pursuit of it—it is found chiefly in the Malay Archipelago—is quite likely to give the hardy adventurer all he wants of hardship and excitement.

There isn't a word about gutta-percha in Mr. Couzens' novelette in this issue, but you won't miss it any. For there's quite a little excitement in pearls.

HAPSBURG LIEBE, whose story "The Preacher and the Gun-Man" appears in this issue, is writing just now from the mountains of East Tennessee, "moonshine" country and his native heath. He has roamed over a good deal of the earth's surface, and, among other things, he served in the Philippines.

Well, he and I have become pretty good friends, though we have never seen each other, and one day he chanced to tack on to the end of a letter something he thought might interest me. It did. "A copy of a message of some sort that was written in my diary without my knowledge." This was at Calviga, Samar, P. I., March 8, 1901.

Now Mr. Liebe had several interesting adventures with the natives. There was a certain Balas, who, after they had fought hand to hand for a quarter of an hour— But that is a tale to itself, as is the story of Alejandra de la Cruz and her brother. To return to the mysterious message:

"As well as I remember, I lost the notebook, and when I found it again the following, in the Visayan dialect (one of the Visayan dialects—there are many), was written in a quaint, yet fairly plain, handwriting:

"Moramion cargado sen gudma naray pacag asoy. Cargado sen colba lastima moramion pag asoy cay narayman molta condere malo oy.

Pagca Moramion san can Carlos gudma cagaje laromna niga babate a inin iga dagpan nga nag veve benta san daco nga gudma san inga daraga.

Conda paganpan cay Amerecano uaray mardro yag sinin Filipino sen papa nga saira sinin Amerecano cay macajarod lac sen paguc crempi. Maupay nadavla aton amegupuu an Amerecano aton la sangenyon cay oara. Maivricanpay cun atun paglabtun varay tagud capas aton atubang.

"The words 'Amerecano' and 'Filipino' of course are recognizable. 'Uaray' means 'I have not;' the rest I do not know. I have wondered if it were a warning of some sort. I had many friends among the Filipinos, who called me 'Carlos.' That name, you will have noted, is mentioned in the above jargon. I should have had it translated while I had an opportunity."

It is eleven years now since those words were written, and their message has not yet reached the man for whom it was intended. Would it have made a difference? Was it penned in friendship, or hate, or treachery? Isn't there some one among our readers in the Philippines, or among those who have seen service there, who happens to know this particular Visayan dialect and can solve the riddle?

BORN in London, 1878; educated at the City of London School and Corpus Christi College, Oxford; coxswain of his college boat; London *Daily Telegraph;* special correspondent on many military and naval maneuvers; traveled over most of Europe and always makes a point of seeing places where important scenes in his books are enacted—this is H. C. Bailey, whose "Out of Prison," one of the tales of Dick and Captain Doricot, appears in this number. Mr. Bailey is at present dramatic critic of the *Telegraph.*

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The Most Damning Indictment of the Judiciary Lies in the Plain Statement of Incontrovertible Facts.

IN some states it is cheaper for corporations to kill than simply to injure. For if hurt, a foreigner may sue for damages; but if killed, his family or dependents across the water may not hope for damages.

Our coastwise steamship lines are controlled by competing railroads. And freight rates are all askew.

There is not a harbor in the United States to-day that is not practically under the control of the railways.

The Supreme Court of the United States read the word UNREASONABLE into the Sherman Anti-Trust Act; and the stock of our trusts, after "busting," continues to go up.

These things are so, not because of laws on our statute-books, but by reason of interpretations of law by our Courts of Justice.

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